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WILD LIFE IN FLORIDA,

WITH

A VISIT TO CUBA.

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CAMP IN MYAKKA SWAMP.

WILD LIFE IN FLORIDA,

WITH

A VISIT TO CUBA.

BY

F. TRENCH TOWNSHEND, B.A.
CAPTAIN, SECOND LIFE GUARDS.
AUTHOR OF 'TEN THOUSAND MILES OF TRAVEL,' ETC.

A GROVE OF CABBAGE PALM.

LONDON:
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TO

EDMUND A. MANSFIELD, ESQ.

MASTER OF THE KILDARE HOUNDS

MY FELLOW-TRAVELLER IN FLORIDA

THESE PAGES ARE DEDICATED.

M358757

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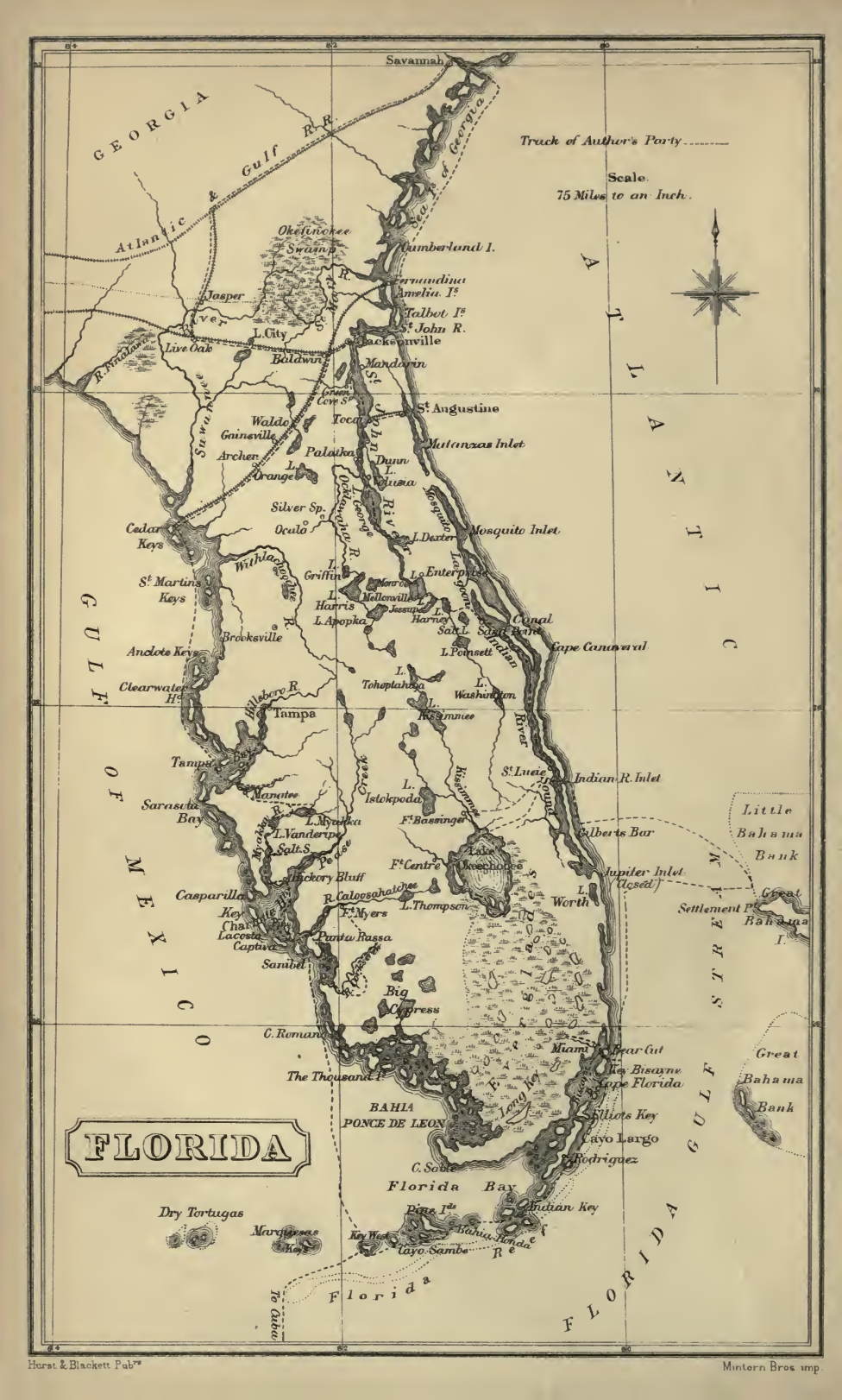

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WILD LIFE IN FLORIDA.

INTRODUCTORY.

HISTORY—GEOGRAPHY — CLIMATE — NATURAL PRODUCTIONS — ANTIQUITIES — CONDITION, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL, OF THE PENINSULA OF FLORIDA, AND INDUCEMENTS TO VISIT IT.

FLORIDA, the most southern of the United States of North America, was so named by Juan Ponce de Leon, the Spanish Governor of the island of Porto Rico in the Caribbean sea, to whom a marvellous story was related by an Indian Cacique. This Indian told of a land of great riches in gold and precious stones, to the north of the setting sun, not many leagues away from Porto Rico, exceeding all other lands in beauty of scenery, and possessing

a marvellous fountain of water, which gave health to the sick and youth to the old. No tale was too wonderful to obtain credence in those days, so Ponce de Leon fitted out an expedition of three ships, and landing on the eastern shores of the peninsula on Palm Sunday, A.D. 1513, gave the land the name it still continues to bear. According to some accounts, in honour of the day—Pascua Florida—according to others, on account of its being—Terra Florida—the Flowery Land.

Returning to Porto Rico, after a vain search for the fountain of youth, the gold and precious stones, Ponce de Leon made another expedition ten years later to Florida, when he was attacked by the natives and received a wound from the effects of which he died. Many other expeditions were afterwards undertaken with a like object, but instead of wealth and everlasting youth, ruin and death resulted to most of the adventurers, while the Indians fought with a courage and desperation which astonished and disheartened the Spaniards.

It was not until A.D. 1565 that Florida was permanently settled by the Spaniards, but she did not long retain her nationality. Ceded to Great Britain

in 1763 with a population of only six hundred, she was re-ceded to Spain in 1784, sold to the United States in 1819, received a territorial government in 1822, and was admitted to the Union as a State in 1845. From 1815 to 1858, the country was harassed by repeated Indian wars, and in 1861 Florida joined the Southern Confederacy; then her soil was for four years the scene of many bloody fights, until 1865, when the ordinance of secession was repealed, and in 1868 she was re-admitted to the Union.

Thus for three centuries and a half, constant changes of nationality and desolating wars have so depopulated and retarded the progress of Florida that she has to-day all the characteristics of a newly settled territory, notwithstanding the fact that on her soil was built the first permanent town erected by Europeans on the continent of North America.

Looking next at the geography of Florida, it will be seen that her shape is that of a boot turned upside down, the foot part extending some three hundred and fifty miles from east to west, along the parallel of 31° north latitude, and from 80° to 88° of longitude west of Greenwich; whilst the leg or

peninsula proper extends southwardly from 31° to 25°, north latitude, thus reaching over some four hundred miles. The State contains about sixty thousand square miles, with a population estimated in 1860 at one hundred and forty thousand, in 1870 at one hundred and eighty-seven thousand. The peninsula has an average width of a hundred miles, with a coast line exceeding eleven hundred miles, exposed to the cool gulf winds on the side of the Gulf of Mexico, and trade winds or variables on the Atlantic side, which constantly blow from sunrise to sunset. Lying within the region denominated as "hot" by physical geographers, Florida has the same latitude as Northern Mexico, the Sahara desert, Arabia, Northern Hindostan, Burmah and South China.

The seasons are tropical in character, consisting of a wet and dry season, with an annual rainfall of nearly sixty inches. The wet season commences in April or May with almost daily thunder-storms, the regular rains setting in late in June, and lasting until September, at which time the greater part of the peninsula is under water, and the climate is debilitating in the extreme and unhealthy.

During the Winter, or dry season, from October

to the middle of April, scarcely any rain falls, the climate is glorious, and exceptionally healthy in some favoured spots. Diseases of miasmatic origin are prevalent all the year round, such as dysentery and fever, but are more severe in the middle parts of the State than on the sea-coast, where between October and May they are comparatively rare.

The large amount of rain during the wet, and heavy dews during the dry season, combine with a burning sun to produce a power of vegetable life so wonderful as to be almost incredible in the swamps, lagoons and low-lying belts of jungle called "hammocks." Frost has been felt in all parts of the State in the two coolest months of December and January, but very rarely below latitude 28° north. So charming did we find the climate from January to the middle of March, that when things went a little wrong, and we felt inclined to grumble at the hardships which are inseparable from life in a wild country, one or other of us was sure to make some remark on the "glorious climate," and the thoughts of the hardships would fade away before the sense of what a pleasure life was under such a cloudless sky, and

amid such beautiful vegetation. After the middle of March, the heat became too great in Southern Florida to hunt or exert ourselves after sunrise, but up to that time the climate was simply perfection, with the exception of two or three days on which a "norther," or gale from the north-west, blew, when the temperature fell some forty degrees, and we felt the cold severely.

In October, the peninsula and keys are liable to violent hurricanes, which cause great destruction to life human and vegetable, driving numerous ships upon the sandy shores, and uprooting forest trees with their furious blasts. On the 6th October, 1873, occurred one of the worst hurricanes ever known in these latitudes, its effects being most violent throughout the Gulf of Mexico. Frequent mention of this hurricane will be found in the pages of this book, as we continually come across signs of its devastating passage.

The greatest drawback to personal comfort, when camping out in Florida, undoubtedly are the mosquitoes, besides which plagues there are sand-flies, horse-flies, blue-flies, fleas, ticks, tarantulas, scorpions, centipedes, rattle-snakes and mocassin-

snakes in incredible numbers. Although in the excitement of the chase we thought but little of danger, still the whir of the rattle-snake would sometimes send a shudder through us, when heard as we forced our way through a dense covert; and a rustle among the dry palmetto leaves, outside our tents at nights, would cause a thrill of fear to mingle with the silent curses which were wont to greet the sharp buzz of the first intruding mosquito.

What Southern France and Italy are to Europe, Florida is now becoming to the more Northern states of America, *i.e.*, a refuge for those whose state of health compels them to seek a more genial climate; that of Florida being considered preferable to any other portion of Northern America for those suffering from pulmonary diseases.

To Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Pilatka, and the numerous hotels along the banks of the lower St. John river, tens of thousands of visitors flock from the Northern and Southern States every Winter, arriving in November and departing in March. Beyond a trip up the St. John river,

however, these passing visitors see nothing of the country; the south-west, south, and south-east of the peninsula are still unvisited and unknown, except to the men who herd cattle on the vast palmetto prairies of the interior, and the few Indians who still wander among the swamps of the Everglades.

Though big game is now scarce in Florida, and is becoming every year scarcer, wild fowl and fish abound in numbers I have never seen equalled in any other part of the world. Three hundred and fifty varieties of birds have been already found in Florida, and their multitude perfectly astonished me; flowers covered the ground and hung in brilliant festoons from the trees, while flowering shrubs of rare and beautiful species clothed the banks of every little stream and formed a dense undergrowth in the wooded, river bottoms. For the naturalist and geologist Florida may truly be called a Paradise, and for them it still contains a wealth of undiscovered riches.

Few traces of its original inhabitants remain except the shell and earth heaps, and what

are called "Indian mounds," some thirty feet in height, which have been found, when opened, to contain human bones, beads, charcoal, and pottery, and are seen in all parts of the peninsula, and also on some of the larger islands. The greater part of the State is a dead level, the highest elevation crossed by the railway traversing Northern Florida, between Fernandina on the Atlantic and Cedar Keys on the Gulf of Mexico, being only one hundred and eighty feet above sea level, reached by a gradual slope from the sea-coasts, while in Southern Florida the land rarely rises more than six feet above the level of the tide. So tired does the eye become of this monotonous level that the traveller longs for a range of hills to bound the view, or break the dead sameness of the vast palmetto prairies which stretch out to the horizon, as unbroken a level as the ocean in a calm. In order to attract immigration into the State, a Bureau of Immigration has been established at Tallahassee, the State capital, under a commissioner of immigration, by whom are issued pamphlets of so called, "Reliable information

concerning the resources of the State, and the inducements it offers to those seeking new homes." These "resources" and "inducements" are dilated on with an unsparing liberality which must considerably disappoint the new-comer, who is thereby led to think he has reached a land "flowing with milk and honey," where the soil will spontaneously produce fruit sufficient to maintain him and his family with little or no labour.

The truth is that hard work and steady labour are necessary to the success of the settler in Florida, and that in a climate where the white man's energies soon become relaxed and labour of any sort is hard labour indeed. The scrub-palmetto which covers the whole face of the country, excepting the swamp lands and savannas, from the borders of Georgia to the Everglades, requires a heart-breaking amount of labour to eradicate it from the soil, though this must be done before cultivation can be attempted. Fire will only destroy the tops of the palmetto, the roots, which run along and just beneath the surface of the ground, have to be stubbed up, while they grow so thickly that from

half an acre of cleared ground I have seen a collection of palmetto roots forming a pile some forty feet square.

Some of the best land in the State is at present uncultivated and unsettled owing to its being held under what is called "Spanish Grants," that is, ancient grants of large tracts of land made by the Spanish Government to individuals at the time when Florida was a Spanish possession. When ceded to the United States, these land-grants were secured to their then proprietors and their heirs, so that they are generally held by aliens who do not reside on their property or take any interest in it, thus forming a serious bar to the prosperity of a large portion of the State.

All that part of Florida which has been surveyed by the Government is divided into squares six miles in length and breadth, called townships. Each township is divided into thirty-six sections which are each one mile square, and each section is divided into quarter sections containing one hundred and sixty acres each, measuring half a mile on each side. Each of these sections of one hundred and sixty acres of Government land forms what is called

a homestead, and may be homesteaded or entered free by any head of a family who is a citizen of the United States, or who has declared his intention of becoming such, provided he does not own that amount of land already, or that he has never before entered a homestead. Government land near the railroads is valued at two dollars and a half the acre, and only eighty acres are allowed for a homestead, except to officers and soldiers who have served in the United States army; they are allowed a hundred and sixty acres of the lands valued at two dollars and a half. The valuation of the rest of the Government land is one dollar and a quarter the acre.

As was the case when starting for the hunting grounds on the Far Western plains and in the Rocky Mountains, I found it impossible to obtain any reliable information in the Eastern cities as to the prospect of sport in the wilds of Florida. Even in Jacksonville, the west and south of the peninsula were unknown ground, concerning which I could obtain neither books, accurate maps, nor information derived from personal experience. Starting, therefore, quite in the dark as to what means of loco-

motion we might we able to obtain, or what sport we might expect, we were fortunate enough to succeed in making a complete tour of the peninsula, visiting many remote spots scarce known even to the native hunter, cutting our way with the axe through jungles, paddling in canoes down unexplored rivers, and sailing with half-savage "wreckers" among the lonely islands off the southern coast of Florida, one of the most dangerous and dreaded coasts in the world.

Many Englishmen now visit Florida in the Winter, both for health and for the sake of sport and adventure, and to them I trust the following account of our tour may be of some interest; while to those who have not yet visited Florida, but who may chance to read these pages, I say "Visit Florida between the months of October and February, and you will enjoy one of the most perfect climates, and see one of the most interesting countries in the world." Though not a "paradise" for sportsmen, the sport is still sufficiently good to please those who go in for sport and not for slaughter; though the fare is hard, and the drawbacks neither few nor insignificant, I know no

time I ever enjoyed more, taken altogether, than the months of wild life I spent in the forests, prairies, swamps, and mangrove-clad keys of Florida.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST VIEW OF FLORIDA—FLORIDA "CITIES"—FERNANDINA—CUMBERLAND ISLAND — ST. JOHN'S RIVER — CROSSING THE BAR— THE SISTERS — PABLO CREEK — HUGUENOT COLONY — YELLOWBLUFF—BASS FISHING—OYSTERS — REACH JACKSONVILLE.

A BACKGROUND of sand-hills topped by palmetto, pine, and live oak, and fringed by a beach of glittering sand, stretching away to the south; a foreground of sand-banks at the mouth of a river, over which the white-crested waves dashed furiously, formed the first picture of Florida presented to our view on the last Sunday in January, 1874, about a couple of hours before sunset.

We had left Savannah, Georgia, the previous afternoon, on board the steamer "City Point,"

in such a storm of rain and wind that, unable to cross the bar at the mouth of the Savannah river, we had been compelled to drop anchor inside, and wait till the weather moderated. Before daybreak, the following morning, the clouds dispersed and the wind dropped, so we hove up anchor, and by sunrise were steaming away to the south, never losing sight of the low sea Islands of Georgia, famous for their long staple cotton.

Twisting in and out through the buoys which mark the narrow channel, we crossed the bar formed by the waters of the St. Mary and Amelia rivers, with a depth of only twelve feet of water, as shown by the lead, and rounding the decaying old battery at the north corner of Amelia Island, ran alongside the wharf at Fernandina, the chief city of Nassau county, the most north-easterly portion of Florida.

In Florida, as in the Western states of America, every collection of half-a-dozen wooden houses is called a city, and though Fernandina has a couple of thousand inhabitants and may be called a small town, it did not take long to become acquainted with the chief features of the place and immediate

neighbourhood. Strolling about the sandy streets of this old Spanish settlement, we found it consisted of two second-rate hotels and some boarding-houses, various wooden churches and schools, a number of stores, and some steam saw-mills, while the only places of amusement we could discover were a billiard-room and a bar. A railroad connects the island with the main land and the Gulf of Mexico, and a spacious bay is formed in front of the embryo city by the St. Mary's river and the tide water-channel called the Amelia river; with good depth of water, once the bar is crossed, it forms one of the best harbours on the South Atlantic coast.

The great attraction of the place is the eastern sea-beach of the island, which furnishes a level drive thirty miles in length, over fine white sand reached by a good shell road two miles long. From the earthworks to the north of the town, remains of the late Civil War, the view over the bay to Cumberland Island, with Dungeness, as the former home of the revolutionary General Greene is called, nestling among the woods, is pretty, and in the interior of the island are several interesting Indian

ms

burial mounds. A thick growth of myrtle and palmetto, oleander and live oak, have almost obliterated the traces of former cultivation, but it is still evident that the island has seen better days. A few invalids appeared to be wintering at Fernandina, but chiefly of a class to whom expense was a greater consideration than either luxury or amusement, nor did the place strike us as either fashionable or desirable Winter quarters. Though the climate is said to be cool in Summer and warm in Winter, we found the evening chilly enough to make a fire in the hotel-parlour a luxury not to be despised.

The following morning after breakfast we were perfectly ready to leave Fernandina, so were on board the "City Point" in time to steam out again through the Cumberland Sound Channel, when we directed our course south for the mouth of the St. John river. In a couple of hours we had accomplished the twenty miles which intervene, and arrived opposite the sand-hills and light-house which mark the entrance to the river. Turning the steamer's bow towards the land, we cautiously approached the bar, but

not finding sufficient water, although we only drew seven feet, we again turned eastward and for an hour steamed round in a wide circle, waiting till the tide should rise sufficiently high to enable us to cross the bar.

At mid-day we made a second attempt, and the lead showing eight feet, we dashed in among the breakers, sending the water flying over our bows; in a few minutes we were inside with a depth of twenty feet of water, rapidly ascending the St. John river, which at its mouth has a width of about one mile.

Passing Baton Island, settled by a number of river pilots, an extensive salt-marsh formed the northern bank of the river, and through this a number of sluggish streams wind, forming the "inside passage" to Fernandina. Near the entrance of this passage a number of mounds, from twenty to fifty feet high, appeared, known as "the Sisters," or the "Oyster Banks," as they are composed of broken oyster shells covered with low scrub. As we ascended, the river rapidly widened; on the southern bank a dark lagoon called Pablo Creek, runs back through a dense, dark forest, its

surface nearly covered with water-lilies. A little higher we passed on the left a bluff some twenty feet high, covered with palmetto, pine, and cedar, called St. John's Bluff, interesting as the site of the massacre of a Huguenot colony by the Spaniards in 1565, who shot down the colonists of Fort Caroline, as the settlement was called, "not as Frenchmen, but as heretics;" a deed avenged three years afterwards by a Frenchman named De Gourgues, who attacked and massacred the Spanish garrison of the fort, "not as Spaniards, but as murderers."

This headland passed, we steamed on a few miles, with a flat, wooded country on either hand, till we reached a ricketty timber landing-stage projecting from the shore, where there is a settlement of two or three wooden houses on the north bank, called Yellow Bluff. A number of fishing-boats were busily engaged near the landing, hauling in nets well filled with bass and various other fish, while other boats were laden to the gunwale with oysters, which are found in large quantities near the mouth of the St. John.

In an hour more we sighted the saw-mills at

the east-end of Jacksonville, and soon after made fast alongside the wharf among quite a crowd of trim-looking schooners and river-steamers of every description, from the nondescript little flat-bottomed craft with wheel in the stern, used to ascend the creeks and shallow inland lakes, to the large side-wheel steamers, like the "City Point" and "Dictator," which, starting from Charleston and Savannah, ascend the St. John River as far as Palatka, seventy-five miles above Jacksonville.

CHAPTER II.

A SABLE JEHU—JACKSONVILLE—TOURISTS—HOTELS—STREETS—RIVERSIDE—A SOUTHERN VILLA—A SHELL ROAD—CLIMATE FEVER—FROST—WEEKLY DANCES—MEANS OF VISITING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD—STORES NECESSARY FOR CAMP LIFE—MAPS OF FLORIDA—HUNTING GROUNDS—A VETERAN SPORTSMAN—DETERMINE TO MAKE FOR THE GULF COUNTIES.

"SAY, Boss. Will yer ride?" was the polite remark addressed to me by the negro driver of a very smart hack-carriage, as I smoked a cigar at the door of the Grand National Hotel, the morning after our arrival at Jacksonville. Declining the sable Jehu's offer, we proceeded to inspect the town on foot, neither a long nor fatiguing operation. Containing some ten thousand inhabitants, Jacksonville is now the largest

town in Florida, and is rapidly increasing in size; it is the emporium and commercial capital of the State, and is crowded every Winter by immense numbers of tourists and invalids from the North and from Europe. Three large hotels and innumerable lodging-houses offer a variety of accommodation, that at the Grand National and the St. James' being quite equal to any met with in the Southern States. The town consists of one long, sandy street with wooden side-walks, called Bay Street, where are all the principal stores; a number of half-finished streets running at right angles; and a couple of avenues, nicely shaded with live oak and magnolia, running parallel to Bay Street, on which are most of the lodging-houses, little wooden cottages with projecting shingle roofs and gardens.

The deep sand of which the streets are composed makes the dust very annoying, but no attempt has yet been made at road-making. Most of the buildings in the town are wood, though there are a few built with bricks made of native clay. On the river-bank, south-west of the town, is the suburb called Riverside, extending about a mile

in a curve, so as nearly to front it, and offering the best view that can be had of both town and river. This suburb contains the residences of the principal citizens of Jacksonville, and consists of a number of villa residences with orange and flower-gardens sloping down to the water's edge. At one of these we passed a pleasant evening, enjoying the hospitality of a southern gentleman to whom we brought letters of introduction, and getting well posted as to the condition of Florida and our chances of sport. As we strolled home by the broad expanse of the St. John river, in which were reflected the twinkling lights of Jacksonville across the bay, and the dark forms of the forest trees on the opposite shore, silvered by the soft light of the southern moon, the very appropriate melody of the "Suwannee river," was borne to us on the soft night breeze from a negro cabin some distance off. The shell road by which Riverside is connected with Jacksonville is made, as its name denotes, of shells, principally of oysters and clams, which form an excellent road, dry and hard, the only species of good road I have met with in any part of the Southern States below Richmond.

Though evidently a very thriving place, with a bright and most enjoyable Winter climate for a person in good health, I cannot fancy the climate of Jacksonville suitable for persons in an advanced stage of consumption, of whom we saw numbers about, with hollow eyes and wasted forms, showing that they had come south too late. With a great deal of low fever in Summer, the climate in Winter is liable to sudden changes when a Norther, as the north-west wind is called, blows; the temperature then falls suddenly, varying in twenty-four hours, late in April on our return from the south, as much as forty degrees Fahrenheit, owing to a sudden shift of the wind from south to north-west. Sharp frosts are not uncommon, but during our stay the weather was always bright and charming, averaging seventy degrees in the shade, and reminding me strongly of the climate of Nice or Cannes in the middle of Spring. There are no evening amusements obtainable at Jacksonville, except a dance held every week in the huge dining saloons of the Grand National and St. James' hotels, where all the rank and fashion, native and foreign, assemble and

dance till about one a.m. On other nights the halls of the hotels are deserted, and everybody retired to rest long before midnight.

Numerous steamers ply between Jacksonville and the neighbouring settlements and springs on the river banks ; Mulberry Grove, Mandarin, Hibernia, Magnolia, and Green Cove Springs, at most of which a day can be spent pleasantly enough. By those who prefer it, small sail-boats can be hired, and the fresh breeze which constantly blows from the Gulf or Atlantic makes a day's sail up the broad waters of the St. John, or a fishing excursion down towards its mouth, an amusement by no means to be despised.

At the stores we found every necessary for our contemplated hunting expedition through Western and Southern Florida, excepting Eley's cartridges and tents. We did, however, find a gun-smith in the town, who promised to lay in a stock of cartridges by the following Winter, and where we secured a supply of powder, shot, bullets, wadding, and the metallic cartridges used in the American Ballard Rifle of my companion. The stores we laid in were strictly necessaries and consisted of

the following articles. A demi-john of whiskey, tea, coffee, sugar, flour, baking-powder, bacon, ship's-buiscuits, hominy, lard, preserved milk, a few cans of potted meats and sardines, salt and tobacco; also a saucepan, frying-pan, coffee-pot, tin plates, knives, forks, spoons, tin cups, matches, and last, but not least, an axe, perhaps the most important article for equipping for travel in the back-woods. All these we obtained at Mr. John Clerk's store, a most sporting gentleman himself, and one who gave us all the assistance in his power, so that we might start properly fitted out. We also took fishing-tackle, consisting of hooks and lines of the largest and strongest description we could obtain, though even these afterwards proved too weak to hold the heavy fish we caught in the rivers and bays on the Gulf coast.

Shot-guns and rifles, double-barrelled breech-loaders of 12-bore, with a thousand rounds of ammunition, revolvers, and hunting-knives we brought out from England, so felt ourselves fully prepared to go wherever we were most likely to get good sport, no matter how wild or unknown the country might be; the only things we were

in want of were tents, and these we were fortunate enough to borrow from a friend who knew the country, and had brought them out himself from home. The next question was, where we should go to, so purchasing the best map of Florida we could obtain, a large one published by Mr. Drew of Jacksonville, we studied it intently, endeavouring to trace out a route through the least frequented parts, where civilization had not yet penetrated, and the virgin forests were yet undisturbed by the rifles of sporting tourists, or the approach of the settler, near the sound of whose axe the game is as certain to disappear as the timber is to fall under his brawny arm.

The St. John and Indian rivers on the east or Atlantic side of the peninsula, we knew were the resort of all the tourists who seek Florida for sport or pleasure during the Winter, and several parties of our acquaintance had already started for various localities on those rivers. For the West, or Gulf coast, no parties had started, except a veteran sportsman, Sir St. George Gore, an old acquaintance, whose name was in the mouth of every native of Florida, while the

newspapers delighted to enlarge on the number of horses, hounds, tents, equipages and servants of "Lord" Gore. Hearing that Sir St. George was last heard of somewhere in the county of Manatee, in the neighbourhood of the river of that name, we determined to make for the Gulf of Mexico and mouth of the Manatee river, on the chance of finding him, confident that he would be met with wherever game was most abundant.

CHAPTER III.

A FREIGHT TRAIN—BALDWIN—WHITE FOLKS' BREAKFAST—LOG HUTS—GAINSVILLE—SPANISH MOSS—CARDING MACHINE—A PROPHET OF EVIL—A WRECKED TRAIN—SOUTHERN PROCRASTINATION—CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW LINE—A HOSPITABLE NORTHERNER—A RUINED PLANTER'S HOME—HAMMOCK—TRESSLE WORK BRIDGES—CEDAR KEYS—A 'HARD' PLACE—A NIGHT WALK—GULF STEAMERS—THE HIRAM B. COOL—THE GULF OF MEXICO—CLEAR WATER HARBOUR—TAMPA BAY—CAST ADRIFT AT NIGHT—JUDGE YATES' HOUSE.

SIX A.M. on a beautiful February morning found us "on board" the freight train which leaves Jacksonville every day for Baldwin, a station twenty miles distant, where it is connected with the passenger train from Fernandina to Cedar Keys on the Gulf of Mexico. Passing over a very rough track, through a country of open pine-woods

and swamps in about equal proportions, two hours' run brought us to Baldwin, where we gladly got out of the baggage car in which we had travelled, nearly jolted to death by the unevenly laid rails, notwithstanding the slow pace at which we had progressed.

No sooner had we reached the station platform than we were greeted by a crowd of woolly-headed negroes, each ringing a bell vigorously and proclaiming the culinary merits of the establishment to which he belonged.

"You come long to ole Aunt Sally, gib you fine breakfast."

"Him dam nigger, Widow McCoy gib real white folk's breakfast," said an opposition darkie, but in vain they tried to lure us to their miserable wooden shanties, as we had been warned against the Baldwin breakfasts, so had laid in a good meal before starting. A short delay, and then the passenger train arriving, we entered an extremely dirty car, and were once more jolting along at the furious pace of fifteen miles an hour. Gradually rising and a little less sandy and barren, the country still presented the same dreary succession of pine-forest and

swamp, a few log huts with small clearings appearing at long intervals.

At Gainsville, the capital of Alachua county, a small town of about eighteen hundred inhabitants, we were informed we were in the most fertile part of Florida. Orange trees well laden with fruit surrounded most of the houses, and a considerable number of small farms appeared in the neighbourhood. Near the station we observed a machine for carding the Spanish moss, that funereal looking grey parasite which festoons and ultimately kills the trees in all the southern forests. The moss is packed in bales, after carding, and sent north, where it is used to stuff mattresses, furniture, &c., forming an excellent substitute for horse-hair.

From Gainsville, a stage carrying mails and passengers runs south to Ocala and Tampa, but preferring the Gulf route to the latter place, we continued in the train, passing over a high rolling country with some open forests of pine, hickory, black-jack, and other trees. We had passed the station called Archer, and were approaching Otter Creek, when a broad-shouldered Yankee, with

whom I was conversing in the smoking car, remarked,

"Guess I never travelled so far on this track before without an accident, they call this the tri-weekly train, because not more than three trains a week get through from Fernandina to Cedar Keys." Prophetic words! they were hardly uttered before we heard three hoarse whistles from our engine, the brakes were screwed on and we came to a sudden stop. Going forward to see what was the matter, we found the engine of the eastward-bound train lying on its side in the ditch below the line, entangled in the broken telegraph wires; the tender smashed to pieces, and the front wheels of the baggage waggon embedded in sand, while the track was torn up for a considerable distance. As nobody was killed, the accident had not caused the slightest excitement; the officials in charge of the overturned train were comfortably camped under the pine-trees, nor had any steps been taken to clear the line, though the accident had happened twenty-four hours previously, a lazy dilatoriness fully in keeping with what we afterwards found to be the general character of the Floridans, whose motto would appear to be

"Never do to-day that which can possibly be put off till to-morrow." A gang of labourers having come up with our train, a new line of railway was constructed, circling to the left round the débris of the broken engine, tender, and cars, a work which occupied over six hours. A northern gentleman, who lived near by in a house rented from a ruined planter, had taken compassion on a number of the passengers of the wrecked train, and a farmer whose house stood close to the scene of the accident sheltered the remainder; at the kind request of the Northerner, some of us also proceeded to his hospitable home to wait till the line should be repaired.

The estate on which this house was built had, before the war, been a flourishing plantation on which five hundred slaves had been employed cultivating sugar and cotton. It stretched down to the "Gulf Hammock," a belt of heavily-timbered low land, said to be the richest body of land known in Florida; but like many other plantations throughout the country, this estate is now almost uncultivated, and is fast returning to its original wildness. As soon as the new line of railway was

completed, we continued our journey, descending gradually from the high pine-lands to cypress-swamp and hammock, with its dense growth of live oak, magnolia, hickory, gum, bay, pecan, and cedar linked together by wild vines and other creepers, forming an almost impenetrable mass of vegetation on either side of the line.

Crossing a fragile-looking tressel work, stretching from island to island for several miles from the main land, it was midnight before we reached Cedar Keys, the Gulf terminus of the Florida railroad, about a hundred and twenty miles from Jacksonville, a distance it took us just eighteen hours to accomplish.

Leaving the cars in pitch darkness, we had to shoulder our baggage ourselves, and find our way to the nearest hotel, Cedar Keys possessing two, the "Gulf" and "Exchange." Though warned that both were pretty "hard" places, so dirty and uninviting was the appearance of the inns that the offer of a fourth share of a bed-room at one, and a third share at the other, failed to entice us; and hearing that the southward-bound steamer was then in harbour, we determined

to make our way on board, nothwithstanding the darkness of the night.

Under the guidance of a small negro boy, we again emerged into the street, and stumbling across half a mile of shaky wooden stage, often only one plank in width, pitch darkness all round, the sea beneath, at imminent risk of a ducking, if not drowning, we at last reached the wharf at which lay the steamer. We soon scrambled on board her, and rousing the sleepy steward, were shown to a filthy cabin, where stifling heat, bugs, fleas, cockroaches, and mosquitoes combined to make the few remaining hours of the night anything but hours of rest.

Daylight showed us the "favourite winter resort" of Cedar Keys to be a wood-built village of about four hundred inhabitants, with wretched accommodation for strangers. The harbour is available for vessels of not more than twelve feet draught, and is the port of call for two lines of steamers running north and south. One from New Orleans to Havanna, touching at Cedar Keys and Key West on the way; the other a coast line touching at Cedar Keys, Manatee, and Tampa, and occasionally

running to Punta Rossa and Key West. These lines, though advertised to run weekly, are very irregular, and no dependence whatever can be placed on their days of running. Sometimes they start some days before the advertised time of sailing, sometimes a week after, while so old and unseaworthy are the boats that in any sea less calm than the Gulf of Mexico they would undoubtedly founder.

On board the "Hiram B. Cool," one cracked basin was the only washing accommodation provided for us passengers; of her two life-boats, one was utterly useless, being smashed in the middle, the other leaked so much that constant baling alone kept her afloat, while the ship's machinery was tied together with a string in a manner more ingenious than safe. In this rotten old craft we steamed slowly down the bay formed by the outside Keys, a thick fog only occasionally lifting sufficiently to let us see that we were passing close to small islets covered with brushwood and palmetto, from which ran out sand-banks alive with pelicans and sea-birds. Running down the Gulf at a distance of about ten miles from the land, we continued

enveloped in fog until about four p.m., when it rolled away to the north, and a brilliant sun shone out.

On our port-side appeared the islands of Clear Water Harbour, a number of low islets, keys as they are called all round the Florida coast, among which are some of the best sponging grounds in the Gulf. Off the southernmost of these keys we turned eastward, and crossing the bar with only five feet of water on it, we entered the wide bay now called Tampa, formerly Espiritu Santo Bay. Just before sunset, our skipper informed us that he could not put into the Manatee river, as he was obliged to reach the town of Tampa, at the head of the bay, that night, but that he would give us a boat and two darkies to row us, when we got near the mouth of that river. Accordingly, about nine p.m., M—— and I found ourselves and our baggage packed into the leaky life-boat with two negroes to row us, and a star was pointed out to me as the direction in which I was to steer, after which the "Hiram B. Cool" resumed her course, and soon disappeared in the darkness of a moonless night.

Thus unceremoniously cast adrift, out of sight of land, on a dark night in a leaky boat, we kept our eyes anxiously fixed on the guiding star, and the boat's bows carefully trained in that direction for about an hour, when we came on the buoys which mark the deep river channel for crossing the bar at the mouth of the Manatee river. Hugging the southern shore of the river, we found it fringed with mangrove and cane swamps, with a dark background of cabbage-palm and pine. About midnight such a dense fog came on that we could no longer discern the shore at ten yards' distance, so had to be guided by sound instead of sight, the cry of the 'coons, the howl of the wolves, and the croaking of frogs in the marshes, alone denoting the neighbourhood of the invisible shore.

At last, about two a.m., we found ourselves under a long wooden landing-stage running out into the river, while lights twinkling on shore, the barking of dogs, and crowing of the cocks announced our arrival at the small settlement of Manatee. Here we made our way along the landing, with our baggage on our backs, to a wooden house

about a hundred yards distant, almost hidden in a grove of orange, lemon trees, and bananas, which a sign-board proclaimed in large letters to be "Judge Gate's House."

Violent knocking at last roused up a sleepy and surly landlord, who growled out that the house was full; but after explanations we obtained admission and leave to sleep on the floor, so laying down our air-beds, we pulled off our clothes, wet through with fog and salt water from the leaky boat, and would doubtless have slept soundly had the fleas and other vermin permitted.

CHAPTER IV.

MANATEE SETTLEMENT—BUILDINGS—SITUATION — INVALIDS—A HAMMOCK—PINE LANDS—PRAIRIES—AREA AND POPULATION OF THE SOUTHERN COUNTIES—MANATEE—MONROE—DADE — BREVARD—BIRDS — FISH — WILD BEASTS—HUNTING DOGS—THE BARONET'S CAMP—SAILING—TEMPERATURE—MANATEE RIVER—TURKEYS—FISH—BAIT—FIDLER CRABS—ESPIRITU SANTO BAY—SETTLEMENT OF TAMPA—CATTLE TRADE—INDIAN MOUNDS—SULPHUR SPRING—SUGAR PLANTATION—FOSSIL REMAINS—SOLEMN COUNCIL.

MANATEE village is on the south bank of the river of the same name, about six miles from its mouth; and is composed of a dozen stores, some lodging-houses, a post-office, a Methodist church, and settlers' residences, all of wood. It is a pretty little settlement, each house being surrounded by groves of orange, lemon, citron, and banana trees. Situated on a belt of pine-covered, sandy

land half a mile wide, it is considered very healthy, and is sometimes sought by consumptive people from more northern states; we found two residing in the village, but wasted to skeletons, having evidently come too late to recover.

Behind the belt of pine and palmetto lies the "hammock," or "hummock," as it is sometimes called, a feature peculiar to Florida. It consists of rich river bottoms not wet enough to be called swamp, covered with a dense undergrowth of hydrangia, azalea, sumach, sensitive-plant, lobelia, cassia, senna, and many others, timbered with live-oak, hickory, water-oak, cabbage-palm, cotton-tree, magnolia, scarlet maple, black and sweet gum, cedar, &c., and festooned with wild vine, Spanish moss, convolvolus, and other parasites.

These natural depressions have been gradually filled up by vegetable deposits from the higher lands, which, while rendering them extremely rich, make them at the same time unhealthy. The inhabitants of the country, therefore, select their residences on the higher pine-lands, through which the hammocks are scattered at intervals of a few miles, whence they cultivate the rich bottoms, while they

avoid the malaria engendered by the decomposition of the vegetable deposits in these hammocks.

Besides the hammocks and pine-land, the interior of Manatee, Monroe, and Brevard counties is for the most part covered with prairie, or "perairer," as the natives call it, consisting of low saw-palmetto and grass, on the latter of which great herds of cattle are pastured; ponds fringed with tall saw-grass are scattered over these prairies, and belts of timber, composed of pine and cabbage-palm, intersect them, and are called by the natives "islands." On these prairies we never found much game; the neighbourhood of rivers, hammocks, lakes, and swamps being their favourite resort. The southern counties of Florida are very thinly inhabited. Manatee, with an area of four thousand and seventy square miles, has a population of less than two thousand, and only three hundred and sixty acres of improved land; Monroe County has an area of about three thousand square miles, no cultivated land, and less than five hundred inhabitants, including Indians, but without including the island of Key West; Dade County has an area of four thousand four hundred square miles, a few

acres of improved land near Biscayne Bay, and about a hundred and eighty inhabitants, of whom a hundred are Indians; Brevard County, north of Dade, and west of Manatee and Monroe, has an area of five thousand six hundred square miles, about twelve hundred inhabitants, no village, and no cultivated lands, with the exception of a few acres near the little settlement called St. Lucie on the Indian river.

In all these counties the hammocks are still almost impenetrable jungles, the haunt of wild beasts, reptiles, insects, and innumerable birds, some of brilliant plumage and beautiful song, while the rivers and estuaries teem with fish which fall a far easier prey to the sportsman than do the large game. Without dogs with good nose and high courage it is useless to attempt to hunt bear, boar, wolf, puma, or other big game, as, when pursued, they immediately retreat to these impenetrable jungles, whence it is impossible to dislodge them.

On the northern bank of the river Manatee, nearly opposite the settlement, we found the standing camp of Sir St. George Gore, from whom we learnt that but little sport was to be expected in

the immediate neighbourhood, as his hunters had scoured the conntry for miles round during the last fortnight with very poor results. We determined, therefore, to make our way into the interior of the country, stopping only long enough at Manatee settlement to explore the river, and Espiritu Santo Bay to the settlement of Tampa.

A Pole settled at Manatee kindly lent us a very nice sail-boat, in which we spent nearly every day on the water; the weather was always delightful, a eool breeze from the Gulf springing up regularly about 10 a.m. The thermometer, during the day, generally stood about 82° Fahrenheit in the shade, the hottest hours being from 7.30. to 10 a.m., when the heat was very oppressive, not a breath of air nor a cloud to temper the fierce rays of the sun. At 6 p.m. the breeze invariably died away as the sun sank, and then for some hours it would be very hot, till the heavy dew cooled the heated ground. The nights were always sufficiently cool to obtain sound sleep, nor were the mosquitoes as yet sufficiently numerous to make nets, or "bars," as they are called, a necessity.

The river we found to be from one to two miles wide, for a distance of about fifteen miles east of the settlement, where it narrows to some fifty yards, and is overhung by cabbage-palm, live-oak, and other timber, while the water becomes brackish, and then fresh, but never really good to drink. Among the boughs of the live-oaks overhanging the river there were a few turkeys, and we observed tracks of deer coming to the water to drink, while occasionally an alligator would appear, but they were scarce. Sometimes we devoted our time to fishing for sea-trout, black-bass, and sheep's-head, fish which are tolerably abundant and took our hooks readily. For bait we used the soldier or fidler-crab, which we found in the mud and sand under the mangrove-bushes that fringed the river. I never could help laughing as I watched these brilliant-coloured little crabs marching along with their one long arm extended in the air, often engaging in furious battles with one another, until they suddenly saw me, when every crab would rush for the nearest hole in the sand, thousands disappearing in an incredibly short space of time.

Sometimes we sailed down the river, past the

swamps and cane-brakes near the mouth and the buoys at the bar, to the islands which stud Tampa or Espiritu Santo Bay. Thence bearing north through Hillsborough Bay, it is a sail of twenty-five miles to the settlement of Tampa, on the Hillsborough river, the chief town of that county, and principal settlement on the south-west coast of Florida.

At Tampa there are two hotels, boarding-houses, churches, stores, barracks, and communication with the outside world by stage-coaches across country, and mail-steamers up and down the Gulf of Mexico. There are about six hundred inhabitants chiefly engaged in the cattle trade, the export to Cuba of both cattle and hogs being a large and profitable business.

The oysters in the bay are celebrated for their excellence, and are also exported, but little seems to be done in the way of turning the fish which abound in these waters to profitable account. Most of the settlers' houses are surrounded with orange groves, as at Manatee, but the area of cultivated land in the neighbourhood is but small. A large Indian mound which stands close to the town, was opened

in 1869, and found to contain bones, pottery, and ornaments, as has been the case with the other Florida mounds which have been excavated. The only other curiosity in the neighbourhood is a sulphur spring near the Hillsborough river, some six or seven miles above the town.

Another place we visited in the neighbourhood of Manatee was an old sugar-plantation on the opposite bank of the river, a few miles above the settlement, once a flourishing concern, yielding in 1854 two hundred and fifty tons of dry sugar. Ruined by the war, this plantation is now a favourite grazing ground for the few deer and wild hogs remaining in this section of the country. The only things in the way of ancient remains we heard of near Manatee, were deposits of bones of elephants and some other extinct animals, which one of the settlers told me were numerous in a certain spot he pointed out near the river bank, and of which he had several specimens.

Though we got but little shooting at Manatee or in the neighbourhood, we enjoyed our stay there immensely. Sailing daily in our little craft, with breeze enough to make considerable voyages during

the hours of daylight, and never sufficient sea to make navigation dangerous in our open boat. Making many passing visits to Sir St. George Gore's camp, we discussed the prospects of future sport, seated under the southern palms which sheltered his camp. There in full enjoyment of the cool northern drinks provided by our entertainer, and a fragrant cigar, we held solemn council as to what direction we should next proceed in—councils which resulted in our determining to start at once for the lakes in the interior of the country, and then make our way down to the extreme south by whatever means of locomotion we might from time to time be able to procure.

CHAPTER V.

START FOR THE INTERIOR LAKES—A MULE TEAM—IN A HAMMOCK—ABOVE AND BENEATH—THE FLORIDA PRAIRIES—DIFFICULT TRAVELLING—PONDS—ALLIGATORS—THE SAND-HILL CRANE—GREY WOLF AND BUZZARDS—FLORIDA CRACKERS—A MURDERER—A SETTLER'S HOME IN THE WILDS—FLEAS AND DIRT—DR. HUFF'S FARM—HUMBLE FARE—UPPER MYAKKA LAKE—MULTITUDE OF ALLIGATORS—WILD FOWL SHOOTING—WATER MEADOWS—HOGS—SQUIRRELS AND RACOONS AS FOOD—THE CABBAGE-PALM—A PALMETTO HUT—PALM-WOOD PIERS—A TEXAN HORSE-DEALER—MORNING AND NIGHT IN THE SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN FORESTS.

HAVING procured, for a consideration of six dollars a day, a waggon and mule team with an intelligent youth to drive and guide us, we started in the middle of February for the Myakka lakes, situated some

five-and-twenty miles inland to the south-east of Tampa Bay, a part of the country where we were assured large game was abundant, and turkeys so numerous that they could be knocked off the trees by hundreds. We were at the same time warned that we should have to rough it in the severest sense of the term, a warning which turned out perfectly true, and free from exaggeration, which is more than I can say for the account of the turkeys. Crossing the strip of pine land on which the settlement of Manatee is situated, we soon entered the hammock at the back of it, and found ourselves in a dense jungle of tall cabbage-palm, oak, and willow, where the fresh green leaves of the wild vine and other creepers formed a delicious roof above our heads, sheltering us from the burning sun. A legion of song birds, the red bird and sweet-toned mocking-bird conspicuous among them, sent forth their music from every tree, while flowering shrubs added gorgeous colouring to a scene which delighted both eye and ear as long as the face was turned upward.

From the ground, however, there arose a pungent odour of decaying vegetable matter, and turning the

face towards the earth, the eye soon perceived how fatal to human existence were those very agencies which produced such a redundancy of animal and vegetable life. Through the black soil fetid water oozed, and a deadly mocassin snake glided from under the mule's feet as we crossed the lowest part of the swamp. The hammock passed, we reached some pine-land on which was a small sugar plantation and crushing-mill, and beyond that we passed on to the dreary and barren prairie land which covers nearly all the interior of Southern Florida, north of the Everglades.

I know few places more unpleasant to travel over than these Florida prairies, where the head and body are scorched by the sun, and legs torn by the sharp teeth of the saw-palmetto, in a manner which plays the mischief with a man's wardrobe and inflicts a very painful wound on the person. The horizon is bordered by distant "islands" of pine, while the only animal life visible consists of herds of lean, half wild cattle, picking a scanty subsistance on the natural grasses which grow up where the palmetto-scrub has been burnt by the herdsman.

About two miles an hour was our travelling pace,

as we had no roads, only a sandy track across the plain where the roots of the saw-palmetto made our advance slow and difficult, while in the woods fallen timber, half-burnt stumps, and other obstacles had to be cleared away with the axe before we could pass with the waggon.

Numerous swampy ponds were scattered over the prairie, fringed with tall saw-grass, from which at our approach rose wild duck, plover, and snipe, and flocks of the beautiful great white egret and snowy heron. The surface of the water, which was generally brackish, was covered with water-lilies of various colour, above which appeared the heads of alligators large and small.

Through the pine-islands the great sand-hill cranes stalked majestically, their deep whoop resounding for miles through the air, as they flew away disturbed by our rifle-bullets. We came across no four-footed game, except a solitary grey wolf, which in company with some hundreds of the disgusting but useful turkey-buzzards was gorging himself on the rotting carcass of a cow.

Towards evening, we were overtaken by a party of three "Florida Crackers," armed with

rifle and revolver, as rough a looking lot as one might well meet, followed by two half-bred hounds, as savage-looking as their masters. A growling match between their dogs and ours, and a surly "good evening" in answer to our salutation, was all the greeting that took place between us, the rapid pace at which they walked soon taking them out of our sight. These "Florida Crackers," as they are called, are a class of men only met with in the wilds, who, from various causes, avoid civilization and live by the rifle. Some are the "ne'er-do-wells" of the settlements, while others are simply criminals hiding from justice. Of this party of three who met us, two belonged to the former, and the third to the latter class, being a murderer recently escaped from the county gaol at Pine Level, the county town, as we were afterwards informed by some of the settlers.

What I heard of this man's career was curious, and characteristic of the wild country in which we met him. After escaping from gaol he had wandered about the country, sometimes in company, sometimes alone, frequently meeting settlers and

hunters who knew him well, but never molested him, as he swore he would not be taken alive. At last one of the county officials followed him up, and meeting him about a month after our rencontre, shot him dead, an action which the settler who informed me of the occurrence pronounced a cowardly and detestable outrage, an opinion which was applauded by his wife and the rest of the assembled company.

It was near midnight before the noisy barking of dogs announced our arrival at the house of a settler named Dr. Huff, stock-owner and farmer, by whom we were hospitably received, while we were welcomed with hungry joy by the fleas.

In Florida the dwelling-houses are built much alike in farms, plantations, and villages. Elevated some two or three feet above the surface of the ground, the foundation timbers rest on wooden posts, stones, or brick pillars; on these timbers rests the frame, covered with a weather boarding of common deal boards, the inner partitions being made in the same way. Broad verandahs, called piazzas, running along the front and back of the house, and covered by a projecting shingle roof, afford

the protection from the sun so indispensable in this climate. A wide passage connecting the front and rear of the house is common, through which a draught of air is created, sufficient to drive away the ever-tormenting sand-flies and mosquitoes.

All the houses in Southern Florida swarm with fleas to an extent which makes existence almost intolerable, and sleep to the sufferer impossible. After the first trial, whenever the nature of the ground permitted, I invariably pitched my tent at a short distance from the farm-yards, where I was entirely unmolested by fleas. I believe that dirt alone is the cause of the abundance of these insects, the settlers seldom, if ever, washing their floors; they complain much of the fleas, and say they are bred in the sandy soil, but my own experience showed me that the sandy soil was perfectly free from them, while the houses, which were extremely dirty, were full of them.

Cockroaches, tarantulas, ants, and other "bugs," were nearly as numerous in the houses as the fleas, all of which plagues might be got rid of by a daily use of soap and water.

Dr. Huff's farm consisted of a few acres planted

with Indian corn, tomatoes, melons, and sweet potatoes, all in a flourishing condition, while round the house were a few orange-trees, guavas, and bananas. Though a large owner of stock, fresh butter was unknown in the house, as is the case throughout Florida, and milk was only procured by stratagem. A calf was kept shut up in the farm-yard, and its half-wild mother, coming morning and evening to visit it, was, at considerable personal risk, induced to part with about three pints of milk, reserved for the use of a consumptive man, who, even in this out-of-the-way place, boarded with the Doctor, coughing his life away, far from friends and such comforts as seem even to many a healthy man necessities of life.

The only meat ever seen at table, except what our guns provided, was tough bacon, which was served thrice a day, at breakfast, dinner, and supper. This with a large dish of hominy, with grease poured over it, was actually the only food procurable or thought necessary in the comparatively wealthy and very numerous household of the Doctor, and yet it was only one long day's

journey to the stores at Manatee, where all the necessaries and some even of the luxuries of life could be procured.

Throughout the country, however, we found that such formed the daily and only fare of the settlers, while their drink was water or coffee, often without sugar or milk. If the fare was scanty, the grace was long, its length being in inverse proportion, and frequently amounting to that of a prayer of considerably longer duration than the dinner. Our daily walk in search of sport was to the Upper Myakka Lake, about a mile distant from the house, through a pine-forest with undergrowth of palmetto and pau-pau. The pools left by the overflow of the lake we found swarming with alligators; in one not fifty yards in diameter I counted thirty-five of these hideous reptiles, ranging from eight to twenty feet in length. It made us at first rather nervous, when wading after duck through water and mud up to our waists, to know that the next step might be on the back of an alligator lying buried in the mud, with the probable result of losing one of both legs, but impunity from such accidents quickly

made us bolder. On the lake we found some dozen different varieties of duck, though the large flocks were already beginning to migrate to the north; otters were occasionally met swimming through the water-lilies, and large numbers of them are trapped every season on both the Upper Myakka and the Lower or Vanderipe Lake.

Back from the lakes stretches a large extent of low country, which, being entirely submerged during the rainy season, gradually appears as the waters shrink, and is quickly covered with grass as the mud dries. This grass extends from the water's edge to the higher prairie and pine-land, and affords excellent pasture to numerous herds of cattle, chiefly owned by Dr. Huff and one or two relations of his, settled at considerable distances. Extremely lean while their grazing ground is confined by the waters to the barren prairie, the cattle become proportionately fat as they feed on the rich grasses of the lowlands. The hogs, too, lose some of that greyhound-like appearance peculiar to the Florida pig, both domestic and wild, and horses, which are driven down from the north in large droves,

thrive equally well when left for some months to graze at will on these natural pastures.

In the pine-woods bordering the lowlands, we found some deer, and generally brought back for the larder some grey squirrels and racoons, which abound, and are considered a delicacy by the natives, especially the former; the meat is white and very peculiar in both animals, and not at all to my taste.

On the shore of Lake Myakka I first tasted the "cabbage" of the cabbage-palm, a species of chamœrops which abounds in Florida. Though growing as far north as the mouth of the St. John river, it is there somewhat stunted, but in the south of the peninsula it is one of the most beautiful of trees. Rising in a straight and graceful trunk to a height varying from sixty to a hundred and twenty feet without a branch, it then bursts into a mass of dark-green fan-shaped leaves; in the centre of this mass, protected by numerous fibrous folds, is the tender white shoot called the "cabbage," easily cut out with a hunting-knife by one accustomed to the work, but difficult enough to the uninitiated. In taste it resembles a Spanish chestnut,

and is eaten both raw and boiled. At the time of the Civil War the Southern soldiers ate large quantities of it, but found that it caused diarrhœa and sickness, though said to be eaten by the Indians with impunity. The cutting out of the "cabbage" involves the destruction of the tree, which is as useful as it is ornamental. The leaves form excellent protection from the weather when camping out, a palmetto hut being constructed in a few minutes in the following manner.

A cross timber is fixed between two poles, or trees, from which are slanted the enormous palm-leaves, forming a thatched roof sloping down to the ground, impervious to rain or sun, and large enough to shelter three or four sleepers. The trunk of the cabbage-palm is found to be almost indestructible by water or boring insects, and is therefore largely employed in the construction of the long piers commonly used as landing-stages in the rivers or on the sea-coast of Florida, where the shallow water prevents ships approaching within two or three hundred yards of the river bank or sea-shore.

A curious character arrived at Dr. Huff's during

our stay, in the person of a Texan horse dealer with a "bunch" of thirty-five horses, driven all the way from the plains of Western Texas, some fifteen hundred miles distant, a journey of three months. Starting with a hundred horses, some had died by the way, while others had been sold, and now the remainder were destined to feed on the rich pastures round the Myakka lakes until they should recover from the effects of the journey. Poor wretches, they sadly needed rest; worn to skin and bone, they could scarcely drag their wearied limbs after them, and were constantly falling down from sheer weakness. By passing long poles under the belly, we assisted many to rise that we found lying helpless in the swampy ground near the water the morning after their arrival, while from the carcasses of two the gorged buzzards, in vain attempting to rise, showed that the poor animals would never again suffer from such cruel driving. About twenty-five pounds each was the price asked for these miserable skeletons, a price they would hardly have fetched when fresh, but one which we should not have objected to give for the horses ridden by the dealer himself and his coloured assistant, which

were good, wiry, useful animals, about fourteen hands high, and well-adapted for hunting in a country like Florida. The dealer, however, would not part with his own horses, and we did not feel inclined to bid for the skeletons; so after resting only one night in a palmetto-leaf hut they had erected near our camp, the Texan and his assistant mounted their mustangs with lasso on the saddle and revolver in the belt, and again struck northward, leaving the "bunch" of horses on the pastures to fatten or die, with true Yankee unconcern.

In the early morning we were daily roused up in our camp, about half-an-hour before sunrise, by such a chorus of birds and insects, as was truly marvellous. At that time all created things seemed to awaken to active life as suddenly as, in these latitudes, day succeeds to night and night to day. The deep resounding whoop of the sandhill-crane, the cry of bitterns, herons, and ibis, the confused quacking of large flocks of wild duck, the chattering of parroquets, the melody of a thousand song-birds, the hum of millions of insects, all combined in a sudden burst of sound that would have

roused the seven sleepers. As the sun quickly mounted above the pine-tops, the various sounds would gradually become hushed, till during the mid-day heats all became still as death, again to break forth as the evening sun rushed down to the western horizon, but ceasing as it dipped below almost as quickly as the sound had burst forth in the morning. The silence of the mid-hours of the night was broken by the hoot of the owls, the cry of the night birds, and the more savage voices of the wolf, the panther, the ocelot, and the alligator; so that during the mid-day heat alone is there silence in the forests and swamps of Florida, a curious contrast to the oppressive stillness of the vast northern forests during the daylight hours. When shooting in the Northern States, I have felt the universal silence of the forest absolutely painful, the occasional crash of a falling tree being almost the only sound heard, as the note of song-birds never enlivens those gloomy solitudes.

In the Northern forests no man on horseback could possibly force a way through without free use of the axe, owing to the accumulation of fallen

timber and the fact of the trees growing so close together as to leave no passing-room; but in Florida, except in the swamps and hammocks, the forests are so open that a horseman could penetrate from one end of the country to the other, and few of the rivers or swamps north of the Everglades are too deep to ride across in safety.

CHAPTER VI.

HOG RAISING—TRAVELLING BY OX-WAGGON—THE CUBAN BLOOD-HOUND — FLORIDA HUNTERS — SAW-GRASS PONDS—TURKEY SHOOTING—OCELOT OR CAT—A RATTLE-SNAKE IN THE PALMETTO—CAMP IN THE MYAKKA SWAMP—LAKE VANDERIPE—LAKE AND RIVER FISH—BOAR, BEAR, AND TURKEY HUNTING—A FAT GOBBLER—CAMP UNDER PALMS—CAMP DUTIES—MOSQUITO BURNING—A SHOWER OF SNAKES—ANTIDOTES TO SNAKE POISON—STILL HUNTING—MOISTURE AND RUST—INTENSE HEAT—CATTLE BRANDING—BEAR SIGN—BREAK UP CAMP—OUR WANDERING COURSE.

THROUGHOUT the Peninsula of Florida, large herds of hogs are raised and roam about the forests half wild, finding an independent support on the mast of the oak, the palmetto and other fruit-bearing trees scattered among the pine and hammock lands. As wild hogs also abound, and are in the habit of

inducing the tame sows to retire with them into the woods, and there bring up their progeny in a wild state, it becomes necessary every year to form hunting parties to kill the wild hogs, and thus prevent the sows being seduced from the allegiance which even in their semi-wild state they acknowledge to man.

Some days after our arrival at the Doctor's, a party assembled there for this purpose, composed of all the available male population of that section of the country, and forming a total of six as fine hardy and stalwart young men as one could wish to hunt with in a wild country.

Two ox waggons conveyed the guns, ammunition and general baggage of the party, and a large quantity of salt to cure the flesh of the hogs, deer, bear, and other game we might kill. Two saddle horses offered a change of conveyance to such of the hunters as might be tired of riding in the waggons, or of walking, while to drive the game out of the thick coverts, and protect our camp when absent hunting, four more or less well-bred Cuban bloodhounds accompanied us, the descendants of the animals formerly used by our companions for hunting runaway slaves.

A powerful, fierce, and courageous animal, with extraordinary acuteness of nose, and able to endure the intense heat of a tropical sun, the Cuban bloodhound appears well adapted to hunting in Florida. He will follow perseveringly the wily ocelot, sneaking noiselessly through the dense palmetto, and will tackle the panther or the bear in the thickest hammock. Well-bred dogs of this species are however very scarce in Florida and cannot be purchased, and many a fine day's sport we lost through the want of such animals.

We considered ourselves very fortunate in falling in with this hunting party, and all started in high spirits for the Lower Myakka or Vanderipe Lake, intending to camp on its southern end, some fifteen miles distant from the Doctor's house. Skirting the southern end of the upper lake, our course lay nearly south through a country consisting of alternate narrow strips of grass and jungle, with large live-oaks and cabbage-palms scattered about in picturesque groups; ponds fringed with saw-grass, growing to a height of six to ten feet, were numerous and swarming with alligators. From one pond rose a large flock of the beautiful roseate spoon-

bill ibis, commonly called in Florida the red curlew, the white ibis were in numbers in every pool, and various coloured ducks and snipe lay in the thick grass, rising almost under our feet.

In one of the thick palmetto jungles we heard the hounds baying furiously, and as they pursued some animal here and there through the scrub, a flock of ten turkeys flew out over our heads. A brace of these fell to my gun which was loaded with swan-shot, a size which I soon afterwards found useful against a far larger and fiercer animal than a fat gobbler. From the way the hounds were running backwards and forwards, and across from one large clump of scrub-palmetto to another, it soon became evident to our hunters that they were on the track of an ocelot, an animal called in Florida a catamount, or more usually simply a cat. As the heat of the day was intense, some of the hounds had to be called off every now and then and taken down to the nearest pond, where they lay panting while the owner watched with ready rifle to prevent the approach of an alligator. When sufficiently refreshed, the hound was again put on the trail, so that the ocelot being continually hunted

by fresh enemies, was bound to be exhausted at last.

After the hounds had been hunting for over an hour, I was standing in thick palmetto-scrub up to my waist, watching their movements, when I saw the leaves moving about ten yards from me. Firing at the spot, an ocelot sprang towards me over the bushes, but receiving my second barrel in his spring, fell dead almost at my feet. This beautiful animal measured four feet four inches in length, from the nose to the root of the tail; the fur was reddish, handsomely marked with black spots, oblong on the back, and round on the belly and paws, and streaked; the strength visible in the fore-arm was amazing. A cowardly and ferocious animal, the ocelot commits great havoc among the pigs and calves, and is therefore a most deadly enemy to the stock-owner, being much more numerous than the wolf, cougar, or puma—commonly called the panther in Florida—all of which animals do their share of mischief. The Floridan settlers attempt the destruction of all these animals in every possible way, so that they are now becoming scarce; but the ocelot still abounds, though without dogs it can seldom be found.

Soon afterwards, the hounds killed another ocelot, and by mid-day, when we reached our camping-ground, the result of the morning's sport was as follows. Two ocelots, three racoons, an opossum, a pole-cat, a deer, sundry alligators, the rattles of two large rattlesnakes, and a good bag of turkeys, wild duck, snipe, and quail. One of the rattlesnakes I heard rattling when about twenty yards distant from a clump of cabbage-palms, and cautiously advancing towards the sound, I found a large snake coiled up at the foot of one of the palms, ready to spring, and rattling with fear and rage. I shot its head off, and found its body measured seven feet in length; there were eleven young ones inside it, a fact which was the cause of its rattling while I was at such a distance, and by so doing of its own destruction.

The spot selected for our camp was a few hundred yards below the southern end of the lake, on the banks of the Myakka river, and was concealed in a dense growth of live oak, water-oak, cabbage-palm, vine and other timber and creepers covering the swamp on either bank

of the river. This ground was chosen partly for shelter from the sun and nearness to fresh water, and partly for concealment from any wandering bands of Indians or stray Florida Crackers, who might make free with our camp equipments during our absence hunting.

As all the hitherto published maps of this part of Florida are totally incorrect, I may mention that the Myakka lakes are only two in number; of these, the Lower is also called Lake Vanderipe. The upper lake varies in size according to the season of the year; at the time of our visit, the dry season, it was about three miles in width, by six in length, but very shallow for a long distance from the shore. The Myakka river, which rises in some swamps about thirty miles to the north-east, flows through it and connects the two lakes by a narrow channel. The Lower or Vanderipe Lake is rather smaller than the Upper, being about three miles in width by four in length. The river which issues from the southern end is for many miles very tortuous and narrow, scarcely more than thirty yards in width, and so shallow that we seldom got

wet above the waist, when fording it, except when it was too dark to avoid the deep holes.

Flowing through an entirely wild and unsurveyed country, its banks generally clothed with dense hammock or pine forest, it gradually widens as it approaches the sea, attaining the width of three or four miles at its mouth in Charlotte Harbour, a distance of forty or fifty miles from the lake by river. A few miles below the lake the water is tidal, and swarms with fish to an almost incredible amount. The fish in the lakes, where the water is always fresh, were not good, being soft and muddy, though very numerous, but in the tidal waters of the river there were many excellent varieties.

Some wild hogs were killed the evening of our arrival and immediately salted, but to my surprise I found that the flesh of the sows alone is eaten, the wild boar being considered unfit for human food in Florida, and our companions even asserting that the flesh was poisonous. Assuring them that I had often eaten the flesh of the wild boar in Europe, Asia, and Africa, I tried to persuade them to bring to camp and cook

some of the flesh of the boars we had killed, but they always steadily refused even to cook the flesh for me to eat.

As the sky looked threatening towards sunset, a palmetto-leaf hut was quickly constructed near the camp fire, while M—— and I secured our tents with extra pegs in anticipation of a rain-storm, which, however, only lasted about ten minutes. After the rain came the mosquitoes, and a terrible night they gave us, never ceasing in their attacks until about 4 A.M., or a couple of hours before daylight.

Turning out of our tents at the first streak of dawn, we formed three separate parties; one mounted on horseback to hunt hogs, ocelot, or panther with dogs, another to shoot turkeys or other birds, and the third to stalk deer or whatever wild animals might be found grazing on the flats near the lake. Devoting my first morning to turkey shooting, I took my shot, gun, and compass, and following the course of the river through the thick tangled mass of timber, and wild vine which covered the swamp, here and there I came on open savannas

covered with fresh green grass and wild flowers, and on these the turkey "sign" was abundant.

Very timid and watchful, and a swift runner, the wild turkey is very difficult to approach, but I soon got a right and left at two that rose close to me, while a large "bunch," alarmed at the report of my gun, rose up with a tremendous clatter just out of gun-shot. As the turkeys were now "gobbling," one of the hunters, who came up on hearing my shots, suggested that we should hide among the cabbage-palms, while he imitated the cry of the hen-turkey; this he did on a bone so successfully that a fine turkey-cock came strutting up, erecting his tail and displaying his plumage, which glittered like gold in the sunlight, to captivate the supposed female; a shot from my companion's rifle, however, laid low his pride, and added to our bag a gobbler weighing nearly fifty pounds. The plumage of the wild turkey is far more beautiful than that of our domesticated bird, being of a dark glossy grey and black, the feathers edged with a bright copper colour; from thirty to fifty pounds was the usual weight of the turkeys we bagged, while the amount of yellow fat that

covered the body was marvellously pleasing to our hungry eyes.

Having secured one more gobbler, we had as much as we could carry, so slinging the dead turkeys round our necks we made our way back to camp, where we found breakfast ready, and gradually the various parties dropped in, laden with their several spoils of the chase: deer, wild hogs, ocelot, wild duck, &c.

Warned by the rain of the previous evening and the feverish symptoms of some of our party, that we must move our camp from the swamp to higher, drier, and more healthy ground, we selected a sandy spot under a grove of cabbage-palms on the edge of the prairie, about a quarter of a mile back from our former camp, and moved thither after breakfast. The weather was now intensely hot, my pocket thermometer marking eighty-eight degrees Fahrenheit in the shade at eleven A.M., on the 23rd February; so, following the example of all living animals in Florida, beasts, birds, reptiles, and insects, we sought the thickest shade we could find and dozed away the hours of the mid-day heat. Rousing up about

two P.M., we employed the next few hours in the various duties of a hunting camp, washing, skinning, and drying the game, cleaning our fire-arms, &c, until a couple of hours before sunset, when we again formed parties in pursuit of game, returning to camp and supper shortly after dark.

The sound of the bells on the necks of our oxen as they grazed at will, seldom straying far from camp, served to guide our steps as we stumbled home in the dark through swamps and forest, in considerable dread of alligators and snakes. The first night in our new camp under the palms, we found the mosquitoes so unbearable that we were forced to spend the night in the smoke of the camp-fire, where, though nearly stifled, we were free from their attacks. The following night we determined to try to burn them out, by forming a circle of fire all round our palm-grove. The dry palmetto leaves soon burned up fiercely, and we were congratulating ourselves on having got rid of our tormentors, when one of our party, who was quietly seated under a palm plucking a turkey, jumped up with a yell of "H—ll, it's raining snakes!" as a

rattlesnake tumbled down right on his head from the top of the palm, fortunately stupefied by the smoke, which curled in thick clouds over us. We were not long in destroying this unexpected visitor and some others which fell from other trees a few seconds later, after which we were disturbed by no more of these dreaded reptiles.

In Florida, where the two deadly species of snake, the rattlesnake and the mocassin, are very numerous, the same opinion holds as among the Western hunters, namely, that whiskey is the best known antidote to the snake poison. One of our party said he had cured a boy, a young brother of his own, by making a paste of whiskey and soda in his hand and immediately applying it to the wound, renewing it every two or three minutes, and making the lad at the same time drink as much whiskey as he could, and keep moving about until the poison had worked out, which it quickly did. We carried a supply of soda with us for the purpose of making such a poultice, and pepper, which Dr. Huff recommended to be mixed with it, while our demi-john of whiskey was strictly reserved

for medicinal uses, coffee being usually our strongest drink.

The root of the polk plant, which grows wild in most parts of the country, I was also told is a cure, when boiled to a pulp with whiskey and applied to the wound; but the greatest promptness is necessary in applying any remedy, or death results in two or three hours after receiving a bite.

I had always heard that pigs were not affected by snake-poison, but that they would attack and eat a rattlesnake whenever they could meet one. A Florida stockowner, however, assured me that he had lost several pigs from the bite of rattlesnakes, and reckoned the hogs were as tarnation afraid of them as he was himself. Some of the country dogs get quite a name for killing these snakes, but as a rule they are much alarmed by the rattlesnake, and seem to have an instinctive fear of the sound of the rattle.

When stalking or "still hunting" game in thick grass or palmetto, the snakes are a dreadful curse. It is absolutely necessary to keep, with one eye at least, a sharp look out on the ground, which

interferes sadly with the watchful observance of the game, so necessary to success. The sound of the rattle, too, of the deadly and unseen enemy always sent a cold shiver through me, when the covert was too thick to see whence the warning sound proceeded. Though long boots or thick leather gaiters are a great protection against the smaller snakes, those of large size, with teeth half an inch in length, can strike through almost any leather, or, as snakes can spring their own length, can reach above the protected part.

Another drawback to the sportsman in Florida, armed with valuable English weapons, consists in the impossibility of keeping them free from rust. Though the air is perfectly clear, and no sensation of dampness felt, the atmosphere is in reality saturated with warm moisture.

I have made my guns as bright as rubbing could make them, and oiled them carefully with the best animal oil, and in a few hours found the barrels coated with rust from breech to muzzle. Some sort of paint would, I think, be the best protection, as with constant care I was unable

to prevent the rust doing considerable damage to all my guns.

A peculiarity of the climate, which I also attributed to its warm moisture, and which sometimes made our meals but scanty ones, was the impossibility of preserving fish, flesh, or fowl more than an hour or two after death, unless salted. Fish, though cleaned and scaled immediately when caught in the morning, became putrid by mid-day, and venison was uneatable by the time it reached camp, if killed at any long distance. Even rubbing in salt carefully into the flesh will not preserve the meat more than a couple of days, if killed in hot weather, a cold spell being required for salting down hogs, deer, or other flesh for storing.

As the weather continued intensely hot, our party of hunters announced that they would kill no more hogs, but would, unless cool weather came, return to their several homes in a few days, as the season for branding cattle having now begun a busy time was before them.

The remaining time we spent at Myakka was passed very pleasantly, hunting, as I have described,

in the morning and evening, and always finding a fair amount of game, though not any extraordinary abundance, as the season was too far advanced. On many of the palms we saw bear "sign" in the shape of the impression of their claws, where they had climbed the trees to obtain the mast or fruit. In October and November when the scrub-palmetto and cabbage-palm produce large bunches of berries, of which the bears are very fond, these animals are found in numbers near the inland lakes and rivers, where these trees flourish. In the Spring they retire to the mangrove swamps on the sea-coast, and are rarely met in the interior of the country. One evening, however, one of our hunters, who had ridden off to a swamp some fifteen miles distant, was fortunate enough to kill a full-grown black bear measuring nine feet from nose to tail, and with fairly long and thick hair, though none of the Florida species have the thick coats of the more Northern bears.

Altogether, notwithstanding mosquitoes, snakes, and heat, we were much pleased with the sport we obtained during a week's camp at the Myakka Lakes, where, during the Autumn and Winter, I

have no doubt great quantities of game might be killed. Much of the country was admirably adapted for stalking, offered splendid grazing, and was timbered with a noble growth of tropical and semi-tropical trees.

On the 25th of February the oxen were collected, not without some difficulty and a good deal of strong language, and again yoked. Deer, bear, ocelot, racoon and other skins, with such pork as they had been able to preserve, were packed in the waggons; guns, ammunition, tents, and camp equipage were separated and stowed, some in the waggons and some on the saddles of the horses, and before the sun had made his appearance above the horizon, hearty farewells and hand-shakings had been exchanged all round, and the party broke up, all making tracks across the plain for their several homes. Our wandering course led us to accompany a young hunter named Murray, whose home, a log hut, situated some ten miles distant by a small hammock on the great interior prairie, formed the most advanced post to which any settler had as yet penetrated in that section of the country.

CHAPTER VII.

STRIKING SOUTH—A NARROW ESCAPE—DESOLATE COUNTRY—MURRAY'S HUT—ROUND THE CAMP FIRE—VICISSITUDES OF A SETTLER'S LIFE—BEFORE AND AFTER THE WAR—POOR IMMIGRANTS—QUAIL SHOOTING IN THE SAVANNAS—ABUNDANCE OF SNAKES—START FOR MYAKKA RIVER—OUR CYPRESS TREE CANOE—PITCH AND GUM FOR CAULKING—FLORIDA TROUT—AN ALLIGATOR'S CHARGE—A "SQUARE" SHOT—A PARTING MEAL—SHELL MOUND—START ON OUR CANOE VOYAGE—A HEARTY "GOD SPEED."

STRIKING south, we forded the Myakka river, and proceeded along the savannas, which extended back to the edge of the palmetto prairie. A long line of buzzards settling down among the distant trees, marked the site of our deserted camp, numbers of them having hovered round the place

for the last two days, hardly waiting for our departure to commence gorging on the fragments and offal left round our hunting larder.

Making our way across the hot and dreary prairie, the oxen could with difficulty drag the light waggon through the dense palmetto-scrub, through which no road or track of any sort led. Towards evening we reached a pine island, where I only missed treading on a ground rattle-snake by about half an inch, but fortunately he did not strike, though ready coiled.

The soil of the country we were now in appeared to be sand, very scantily mixed with loam on the surface, and producing nothing but scrub-palmetto and pitch-pine. Further on we reached a rich hammock with a small clearing close by, in which stood a roughly constructed log-hut, about twelve feet square, the home of our companion Murray, his brother and family, once flourishing farmers and slave-owners in the state of Louisiana, but ruined by the war between the Northern aud Southern States.

Heartily welcomed to the best these poor settlers had to offer, we pitched our tent near the well

which supplied the hut, and, round a blazing fire of split logs of pitch-pine, talked of our various experiences of hunting and of life in far distant lands. A soft breeze drove away the tormenting mosquitoes and cooled the night air, so that we piled on logs, lighting up the dark pine forest, as we sat talking till the night was far advanced.

We heard much of the vicissitudes of fortune that had fallen to the lot of our friends, the brothers Murray, since the Civil war had ruined them in company with so many of their compatriots. They, as well as almost every settler we met in Southern Florida, had served as soldiers against the North, and, having fought for some time in the State of Florida, came to settle in it soon after the conclusion of the war. After trying various localities, they had at length penetrated to the wild spot where we now found them, determined to try their fortunes at hog-raising. Apparently this did not answer well, as they were preparing to move in the Autumn and try their chance in the Far Western States, a course I strongly recommended, as I had already formed the opinion, afterwards strengthened,

that Florida is a bad place for a poor man to settle in.

Totally unaccustomed to manual labour, the brothers had been compelled to fell and cut up trees wherewith to construct a log-hut, which the hurricane of the previous October had destroyed. They had commenced to clear the rich hammock land close by, a terribly heavy task, and had cleared, fenced, and planted about an acre when fever attacked them, while insects devoured the little patch of corn and sweet potatoes as soon as they appeared above ground. Their horses died from the attacks of poisonous flies, so that they could no longer attend to the hogs, which soon joined their wild brethren in the forest; and now their whole worldly wealth consisted in a yoke of oxen and waggon, a cypress-tree canoe, half-a-dozen pigs which remained in the neighbourhood of their clearing, and a half-starved bloodhound bitch with two puppies.

It was a sad tale of misfortune and failure, but my experience has shown me that such is by no means a very exceptional case, and often similar misfortunes befall the poor immigrant in more fertile and wealthy States than Florida. Though land can

be obtained for nothing, or next to nothing, in the wilds, in Florida the small legal fare of fourteen dollars for entering a homestead of a hundred and sixty acres is usually disregarded. Money is required to buy stock, and pay for such assistance as is needed to build even a log-house, while provisions must be bought and sickness calculated upon, as every settler suffers more or less from chills and fever, and dysentery is very prevalent, though seldom of a severe type.

The weather becoming rather cooler after our arrival at Murray's—70° Fahr. at six a.m., 80° at two p.m. in the shade—we were able to move about more comfortably, nor were the mosquitoes or flies troublesome, which was a blessing we fully appreciated after our experiences of them in the Myakka swamp.

Except the rich hammock near the hut, where mulberry, gum, live-oak, mahogany, and a hundred other valuable trees and shrubs were crowded together, the country round Murrays' was dreary pine-land on three sides, on the fourth were some green savannas leading in a southerly direction to a part of the Myakka river some twenty miles distant from our last camp, but only three miles from

Murrays' as the river makes a considerable bend soon after leaving the Lower or Vanderipe lake.

In these savannas we got some pretty shooting at the Florida quail, a bird much larger than our quail and appearing to have some affinity to the partridge. All other animals we found scarce, except snakes both black and rattlesnake; the former, as harmless, we always let alone, the latter we invariably killed; small birds too abounded, the gorgeously coloured blue birds and red birds, and the sweet-toned mocking birds, being conspicuous among them by plumage and song.

After a couple of days' stay at Murrays', we arranged with the younger brother that he should accompany us as guide, in an attempt to descend the Myakka river in their cypress-tree canoe to a creek flowing into the main river, by ascending which we could reach a famous salt-spring where he assured us game abounded. Thence we proposed to make our way down through the great mangrove swamps near the mouth of the Myakka river, to Charlotte Harbour on the Gulf of Mexico, and thence ascend Pease Creek to a settlement called Hickory Bluff.

The oxen and waggon were called into use to

convey our arms and baggage down to the river bank where the canoe was fastened, about four miles distant from the hut. It was with great difficulty we got the waggon down to the river, the oxen being scarcely able to force their way through the palmetto, which grew higher than their heads, beyond which we had to clear a road with our axes through a forest of cabbage-palms that grew to an enormous height, numbers twisted in every fantastic form having been shattered and overturned in a confused jumble by the late October hurricane. The river bank reached, we proceeded to examine the canoe, which we found was made from a cypress trunk thirty feet in length, by two feet six inches in breadth, and sharp at both ends, in which were fixed small seats whence to paddle, the paddler in the stern having also the duty of steering.

As we discovered one or two small leaks, we tapped one of the pitch-pines which grew near, and collecting the juice in a small tripod that we carried, boiled it down with some of the gum from the gum-trees and caulked the canoe, soon making her perfectly water-tight.

Meanwhile I rigged up a fishing rod, and using

the small green tree-frogs as bait, quickly provided an abundance of excellent fish for dinner. The moment the line was thrown into the water I hooked and landed a black bass, called in Florida trout, of seven pounds weight, then one of three pounds, and a flattish fish called a perch, weighing nearly four pounds. As I was scaling and cleaning these by the water's edge, I observed the huge head and wicked eyes of an alligator silently and rapidly swimming towards me, attracted by the fish scales on the water. Quickly grasping my gun, which lay beside me on the bank, I imitated the grunting of a pig, till the alligator had fearlessly approached to within six yards of me, then jumping up I gave him both barrels "squarely" in the face, when blinded with pain and rage he lashed the water furiously with his tail, and charged straight at the spot where I stood. I lost no time in making tracks, and scrambled up the river-bank in a hurry, but the alligator striking his head violently against the rock on which I had stood, dived and reappeared on the opposite side of the river, where he crawled out on a mud-bank, and turning on his side in a few minutes lay dead; the large shot with which my

gun was loaded, in anticipation of meeting turkeys, having penetrated both eyes into the brain, had killed this twenty foot alligator as effectually as a rifle bullet.

After thus defeating this attempt on our dinner, the fish were fried and coffee prepared, and, when the caulking of the boat was completed, we had a parting meal together, and a parting bumper to our safe voyage. A large stone jar was then filled with fresh water from a small creek which flowed into the Myakka at the base of a high mound of sand and shells, which marked the spot where the canoe was moored, and, the baggage and gun-cases being stowed in the centre of our frail craft, all was ready for a start. As we paddled out into the stream the elder Murray and his son bade us a hearty God speed, and charged the brother to look well after us, a charge which illness soon prevented his fulfilling, and, inverting our positions, gave us the duty of looking after and caring for him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MYAKKA RIVER—MINERAL OIL—STOWAGE AND DRAUGHT OF CANOE—A LONELY RIVER—SNAKE-BIRDS—A SCENE IN A TROPICAL FOREST — CAMP — MURRAY'S ILLNESS — SLOUGH CREEK—NEARLY SWAMPED BY ALLIGATORS—THE FIRST WHITE EXPLORERS — OBSTACLES TO NAVIGATION — DANGERS OF WADING—CUTTING OUR WAY—CAMP ON THE PRAIRIE—WEARY HUNTERS—MORNING ON THE PRAIRIES—COLD IN THE TROPICS — A BEE TREE—THE PAW-PAW — THE SALT SPRING—BEWARE OF ALLIGATORS—FRESH AND SALT STREAMS —SAVANNAS—THE WILD BEASTS' HOME—FACE TO FACE WITH A BEAR—DEER-STALKING—MOCASSIN SNAKE—THE FLORIDA PUMA OR PANTHER—WILD CATTLE—BATHING—IRREGULAR TIDES—INDIANS HUNTING—INDIAN SIGN.

THE Myakka river, where we embarked in our canoe, was tidal, rising and falling some three feet with the tide. The banks were about twelve feet in height, and the tide being at its lowest

ebb, the geological formation of the bed and banks was very apparent.

The bed of the river consisted of hard, bluish limestone-rocks scooped out by the action of the water into little hollow basins and holes, with edges and projecting points as sharp as spear-heads, and hard as steel. Above the rock, which rose just to the level of high-water, came rich, dark clay about five feet in depth, then sand two feet in thickness, and then a layer of vegetable mould, varying from a few inches to three feet in depth. On the surface of the river-water when boiled, there always appeared an oily scum, showing the presence of mineral oil, an appearance we afterwards noticed on several large rivers, Pease Creek, the Caloosahatchie, the St. John river, and others.

When fully laden our canoe drew just five inches, our gunwale being four inches above water. Our guide, Murray, paddled and steered in the stern, I paddled in the bows, and M—— sat in the centre on a heap of luggage.

Rapidly and smoothly we glided over the dark surface of the lonely river, which gradually widened

as we descended. Hundreds of alligators watched us with startled eyes, slowly and silently sinking out of sight a few feet from our bows; water-turkeys or snake-birds uttered a shrill cry as they flew away from every overhanging tree, and kingfishers darted hither and thither, apparently bewildered by the strange sight of a canoe full of men.

Beautiful ferns and tall lilies, with large white, crimson, or purple blossoms, fringed the water's edge, while the banks were overhung with a tangled mass of the densest tropical vegetation. As the evening sun touched with gold the rich green tops of the palms, and brightened the sombre hues of the live-oaks festooned with grey masses of Spanish moss, and relieved by the bright green leaves of the wild vine and the crimson and white blossoms of the parasitic air-plant, while it reflected its own glowing image in the dark water, till we seemed to be floating in a river of fire, I thought my mortal eyes would never look on any more gorgeous display of tropical colouring.

At sunset we camped on a dry sandy point of pine-land on the left bank of the river, there

about half a mile in width, having come as near as we could calculate about fourteen miles, the latter part with a strong tide running against us. As we sat round the camp-fire that evening smoking, our guide was taken ill with a sharp attack of chills and fever; so, dosing him with quinine and whiskey, I made him roll himself up in a large heap of blankets inside my tent, and the following morning he appeared much better.

Before sunrise we were again afloat, and about half a mile from our last camping ground, came to the mouth of a creek on the left or east side of the river, which our guide called Slough Creek, *i.e.*, the blind creek—and said we could ascend to within a couple of miles of the salt-spring. Accordingly, turning to the left, we entered the creek and paddled up its tortuous channel. On either hand swamp and rushes reached back to the pine woods some two miles distant, and banks of black mud and sand extended from the rushes into the creek, swarming with alligators in incredible numbers.

When obliged by the shallowness of the water to pass close to some of these banks, we were

several times in great danger of being upset by these monsters. They would disdain to notice us until we were a few feet from them, when half-a-dozen would plunge into the water right under our canoe, striking the bottom violently with their scaly backs and sending a shower of mud and water over us. Being from fifteen to twenty feet in length, they could have crushed our canoe with one scrunch of their powerful jaws, and were these animals not as cowardly as they are formidable in appearance, we, the first white men ever known to have ascended Slough Creek in a boat, should not have lived to tell the tale of our adventures.

About two miles above the mouth of the creek we reached the high prairie-land, the river flowing between banks of red clay and sand about six feet high. Alligators were much less numerous, but great numbers of the shy-pook or bittern displayed their ungainly forms as they flew from tree to tree. A few miles higher the stream became narrower and more shallaw, flowing through a dense hammock of cabbage-palm and other trees, and presenting so many obstacles to navigation

that our advance became extremely slow and laborious.

Here and there sand-banks extended right across the creek, so that we had to wait until the tide, which was flowing at the rate of about one foot in the hour, rose sufficiently to float us over them. Sometimes we had to unload the canoe and drag her across the bars, wading in the water ourselves, and keeping a sharp look-out for alligators and large crabs which abounded in the sandy bottom, and might have given our bare feet an ugly nip. Shoals of mullet, long-nosed tobacco-pipe fish with scaleless bodies, bass, and bream darted about, and from half submerged trunks of trees terrapins splashed hastily into the water at our approach.

Soon the obstacles became more formidable, tall cabbage-palms and water-oaks, having fallen across the creek, required to be cut through with an axe before we could advance, no light work with the thermometer at eighty-five Fahr. in the shade, and mosquitoes nearly devouring our half-naked bodies. Slowly advancing thus about ten miles, we found the accumulation of fallen trees in the water so great

that further ascent of the creek became impossible; landing therefore on the right bank, with knife and axe we cut a passage through the tangled mass of jungle and forest trees, to the high prairie-land about a hundred paces distant. There we selected a sandy spot, under a group of six pitch pine-trees, where on ground tolerably free from palmetto and thorny acacia we pitched our camp. As the water in the creek was too salt to drink, we had then to hunt for fresh, which, guided by a thin line of bright green foliage about a quarter of a mile distant, we had no difficulty in finding. Filling our water-jar with the fresh but extremely black water of the little stream, we returned to camp, and after supping frugally on coffee, biscuit and salt pork, we crawled into our tents thoroughly worn out with our long day's labour. Soon the sound sleep of the wearied fell upon me, notwithstanding the mosquitoes and the groans of my tent companion, our guide, who was suffering much from fever and ague and from dysentery.

Roused up about four a.m. by the bitter cold, I turned out of my tent and endeavoured to light a fire, in which task I succeeded only after many vain

attempts. A thick mist covered the face of the prairie, through which the stars faintly twinkled, while everything was saturated with wet, great drops falling from the trees as though it were raining heavily.

Strange as it may seem in so hot a climate, throughout our camp life in Florida we frequently suffered much from cold in the early morning between the hours of three and six, though provided with thick coats and blankets, and never undressing at night. The heavy night dews and mists had by that time thoroughly cooled the heated ground, while the new day was not yet born with its blazing sun, which for twelve hours would pour down from a cloudless sky rays of fire, given back with interest by the sandy soil; so debilitated did our frames then become by the heat above and beneath, that, although the thermometer rarely fell below fifty degrees Fahrenheit at night, it appeared to us a temperature painfully cold though doubtless healthy, as giving renewed vigour to stand the heat of the coming day.

A strong dose of opium and breakfast so far restored our guide that he was able to accompany

us in search of the salt spring which we were anxious to visit. Though Murray had never before ascended Slough Creek in a boat, he had once or twice been camped on its banks when hunting, and said he should be able to ascertain our exact position if we could find a certain "bee-tree" which grew on the edge of the prairie near the head of the creek.

Skirting the edge of the pine-forest which bordered the prairie, we tramped along through the palmetto and paw-paw, or custard apple, a species of Anona, which covered the ground. Observing that the bees, which fed on the parti-coloured blossoms of the paw-paw and other flowers, all directed their flight towards a giant pine-tree which stood alone beyond the line of timber, we made our way there, and found bees swarming about the lower branches, a height of at least sixty feet from the ground, while the girth of this patriarch of the forest was something quite enormous. This unmistakable land-mark our guide at once pronounced to be the "bee tree" of which we were in search, and pointed out a clump of timber about three miles distant across the plain in a northerly direction, as the spot where we should find the salt spring.

Making our way across the prairie in that direction, as we approached the spring a strong smell of sulphur impregnated the air, and a light mist overhung the water. We had some difficulty in forcing our way through the dense growth of scrub-palmetto higher than our heads, acacia, oak and other trees which bordered the spring, but at last we stood on its brink. We found the spring consisted of a circular basin about sixty yards in diameter: the water was clear as crystal except at the south-west edge, where it had a milky appearance, which our guide said sometimes extended over the whole basin. The bottom was covered with shells, and a brown slime which occasionally bubbled up to the surface and smelt like sulphur: the depth was from four to eight feet. Sinking my thermometer in the water I ascertained that the temperature at a depth of five feet was ninety degrees Fahrenheit, while that of the air was eighty-two degrees. To the taste, the water was salt and sulphurous, peculiarly nasty and offering a strong contrast to its marvellously clear and tempting appearance. I was about to test the buoyancy of the water by bathing, when the scaly body of an alligator emerged from the opposite bank,

and swimming rapidly towards us, made me alter my intention, and determine to remain on the safer element.

Proceeding carefully to examine the basin, we found that two streams of most excellent fresh water flowed into it, one on the north, the other on the south-west, while a considerable body of salt water flows *out* of the basin, within a few feet of the spot where the fresh-water stream flows *in* on the south-west. I saw no fish in the basin, but large shoals of mullet in the salt stream flowing out, the bed and banks of which were very remarkable, being entirely composed of trap rock without a particle of sand or mud covering it. Oleander, thorny acacia, laurel, bay, paw-paw, cabbage-palm, and many flowering shrubs unknown to me, formed a dense growth which marked the winding course of the two fresh streams across the prairie, while the salt out-flow, which formed quite a small river, was fringed with forest trees, and a growth of palmetto almost impenetrable.

The prairie and pine forest in the vicinity of the salt spring abounds in savannas of the sweetest grass, with circular clumps of the saw-palmetto scattered

through them, and numerous round ponds where the grass, rushes and water-lilies grow to a height of six or seven feet, having a depth of about two feet of water beneath. Nature having thus provided the sweetest food, the thickest covert, and coolest shade, wild animals, birds, and reptiles of every description seek these tempting haunts, and afford capital sport to the hunters, both red and white, who may chance to visit the neighbourhood.

After examining the basin of the salt spring, we scattered about in search of game which soon presented itself before me in a manner not altogether agreeable. Following the course of the salt outflow, I had struggled through the jungle which clothed the bank, forded the river, and clambering up the opposite bank had just reached the top, when I suddenly found myself within three paces of a black bear, sitting up so as to peer over the tops of the palmetto and see what was coming up the river bank. I confess that I was horribly frightened at the sight of the bear, but so, fortunately, was the bear at the sight of me. Before I could raise my rifle to my shoulder he had crashed into the thick palmetto and disappeared, leaving me uncertain

whether I was most disappointed at not having got a shot at him, or relieved at not having been attacked in such a very awkward position.

In the little savannas we got some pretty deer-stalking, meeting several small herds of six or seven, with some fine heads among the stags, and all tame enough to get within easy shot. In one of the rushy ponds I observed a black-plumaged bird, rather larger than a starling, with two tufts of crimson feathers on its head, one on each side, a bird which our guide pronounced to be extremely rare in Florida, and one which is, I believe, unknown to naturalists. On the muddy edges of these ponds, hundreds of snake tracks were visible, and with the butt end of my rifle I despatched a large mocassin snake which lay coiled right in the track.

Dysentery and fever again attacking our guide at night, he was unable to hunt the following day, so M—— and I started across the prairie at sunrise with many misgivings as to finding our way back to camp again. When near one of the saw-grass ponds, we observed a large animal leisurely trotting towards us, which at first we supposed to be an

ocelot; but as it approached, we perceived, from its tawny grey colour, without spots or stripes, that it was a puma or Florida panther, also called the South American lion. Standing concealed behind a clump of palmetto, it came boldly towards us without getting our wind, till a rifle-bullet interrupted its course, when bounding into the long saw-grass of the pond before we could cut off its retreat, the puma disappeared with a savage growl to die a lingering death, and be found the following day stiff and stark among the tall reeds and water-lilies. We devoted our attention for the rest of that morning to deer-stalking and returned to camp before mid-day, without losing ourselves, as we had anticipated at starting, but without being able to secure any turkeys or any palatable meat, as the deer were now almost unfit for food.

Hundreds of wild cattle exist in Southern Florida, in every respect wild animals, distinguishable not only by the fact of not being branded, as all the cattle owned by settlers are, but also by the very perceptible difference in the natures of the owned and ownerless animals. The former, being collected

every year for numbering and branding, showed no sign of fear at the approach of man, but continued to graze quietly, or moving only a short distance, would stand and watch us as we moved about. The latter, on the contrary, would observe the greatest caution before venturing from the shelter of the forest into the open savannas, reconnoitering the ground carefully, pawing and sniffing the air before daring to feed, and on the slightest alarm dashing away like a herd of buffalo, and disappearing in the nearest timber. Having observed a small herd of these wild cattle grazing on a distant savanna on the left bank of the creek, we were glad to obtain fresh meat for the camp by the slaughter of a fat young cow, selected by our guide as the most experienced judge of what would make the best beef; but except when very short of food, as on the present occasion, we never shot any of the wild cattle. Our camp at Slough Creek being very near the water enabled us to enjoy the luxury of bathing every day after our morning hunt, and again in the evening, the thick foliage affording shade impenetrable to the sun, while no alligators ventured so far up the shallow sandy creek. The

mosquitoes, however, and sand-flies—a venomous little insect resembling our midge—attacked us so fiercely, on emerging from the water, that clothes had to be hurried on without the previous drying generally considered necessary after bathing. On these occasions we made careful observations on the state of the tide, knowing that we could only descend the creek again by taking the tide at the flood. We were surprised to find that there was seldom any regular ebb and flow, but that the water would sometimes run up or down for twenty-four hours or even longer periods. Mentioning this circumstance afterwards to the captain of a coasting schooner, he said it was usual on the rivers emptying into the Gulf of Mexico, as the tides were entirely influenced by the prevailing winds when blowing strong.

The canoe remained, during our stay, moored to a tree which overhung the creek. The heavy part of our baggage, such as ammunition, gun-cases, stores, &c., being left on the bank close by, covered with a waterproof sheet to protect them from the heavy dews. We felt no anxiety as to the safety of canoe, baggage or camp, as we knew

there were no white men in that part of the country; and that a hunting-parting of red men, Seminole Indians from the Everglades, who had been seen to ascend the Myakka river in three boats about a month previously, had again returned seaward, we had learnt by the following "sign." On a bank of the river before ascending Slough Creek, our guide had pointed out to us some sticks, cut and sharpened at the end, stuck into the ground in a slanting direction, corresponding with the ebb or downward current of the river. This, he explained, was the Indian "sign," to any red man who might come along, that the hunting-party had again descended the Myakka, and were making their way back towards the Everglades.

CHAPTER IX.

SERIOUS ILLNESS OF OUR GUIDE—DESCENT OF SLOUGH CREEK—ALLIGATOR SHOOTING—CAMP IN A PINE FOREST—AN ALLIGATOR POOL—MANGROVE ISLETS—THE HOME OF THE EGRET AND IBIS—YOUNG PELICANS—ANIMAL LIFE IN THE WATER—ADDLED EGGS—DANGEROUS ILLNESS OF MURRAY—ROARING ALLIGATORS—THE RIVER BANKS—SNAKE ISLAND—A LOST DINNER A SORE TRIAL—BURNT OUT—LOST IN A MANGROVE SWAMP—SENT ALOFT—A DANGEROUS CROSSING—NARROW ESCAPE—EXTRAORDINARY QUANTITY OF FISH—REACH PEASE CREEK.

ON the morning of the 3rd of March, the increasing illness of our guide, Murray, determined us to break up camp; so, in order to catch the flood tide, we turned out an hour before daybreak, and by sunrise were once more afloat in our canoe making the best of

our way down stream. Our sick guide we placed in the middle of the canoe, as he was too ill to stand any exertion, while I took his place at paddling and steering in the stern, and M—— mine, in the bows. With a fair ebb-tide we descended rapidly, the work of clearing a passage having been so well done on the way up, that the axe was only required once to cut through a fallen tree, which the lower tide had allowed us to pass under when ascending.

The mud banks at the mouth of the creek we found, as before, swarming with alligators, of which we shot two, which disdained to move off the banks as we passed at a distance of only a few feet. I have no doubt we could easily have killed five hundred in a day, had we so chosen, but as we could not eat them, and had no time to bury the carcass, in order to extract the teeth when rotten, we did not care to shoot them. An additional reason for sparing them was the thought that their dead bodies would pollute the river water, which we might be compelled to drink should we not discover fresh water creeks lower down.

From the mouth of Slough Creek we paddled

down the Myakka river for about four miles, when, the tide having turned and flowing against ns, we camped on the right bank, on a high piece of pine-land, where the vegetation marked the presence of a fresh water stream.

Sheltered by overhanging banks, we found a deep pool of fresh water in the bed of a little stream which was dry, except where the water had collected in holes. That in the pool was nearly black, had a musky smell, and contained a number of small alligators from six to twelve inches in length. For want of better, however, we were forced to use it for coffee, and even in Florida, where sweet or wholesome water is very rare, I seldom tasted any such revolting stuff.

At our camping ground, the Myakka was about a mile in width, but so shallow and full of sand-banks that we could hardly drag our canoe along the water, wading ourselves in long, thick boots, to protect us from the electric fish, sting-rays and crabs which abounded in the river. Opposite and below our camping ground were several small islands, covered with low mangrove trees, the resort of thousands of birds which had built their

nests in them, and whose droppings gave both trees and shrubs beneath the appearance of having been whitewashed.

Stowing guns and fishing-tackle on board our canoe, when the camp was pitched and dinner over, M—— and I paddled quietly down with the tide to one of those mangrove islets, about a mile below our camp, whence there issued a very Babel of birds' cries audible for miles. As we approached the islet, hundreds of wild-duck flapped slowly away across the water, too fat to rise; and as we ran our bow up on the sandy beach, there rose above our heads flocks of pelicans, flamingoes, great white egrets, roseate spoonbill-ibis, blue and snowy herons, a dense mass of screaming, circling, beautiful birds, that filled us with no less wonder than pleasure.

On the islet fresh objects of interest met us at every step; the large mangrove trees were filled with the coarsely constructed nests of the pelicans, herons and ibis, all with eggs or young birds in them. The young unfledged pelicans with their enormous beaks gaping wide, were about the ugliest little monsters I ever beheld, nor were

the young herons much more to be admired. Taking several of the eggs of the various birds, we left the young pelicans alone, as we could not bring ourselves to eat such hideous animals, though they are considered a great delicacy in Florida. While we explored the nests, the parent birds kept flying about in a dreadful state of anxiety, coming often within a few feet of us; so we had no difficulty in securing specimens of these birds, which we wished to preserve on account of their beautiful plumage.

In the water, we found animal life as abundant as on the islets, the moment a baited hook was thrown in, it was immediately seized by some voracious fish. Sometimes the strong hand-line broke at the first tug, sometimes we hauled alongside the boat some monster that we dared not handle, so had to cut the line ourselves, and let the fish go, hook and all. Cat-fish, sting-rays, bass, and electric fish abounded, but we caught few eatable kinds, two large black bass being the only ones reserved for our supper.

On returning to camp we roasted some of the eggs of the pelicans and herons, but found them

either addled or too strong flavoured even for our stomachs, though we had long ceased to be particular as to what we ate or drank. Tired enough with the great heat of the day, and extremely anxious about the life of our guide, who was now very ill indeed, we turned into our tents that night resolved to make a determined effort to reach some human habitation next day, where our sick guide might remain until he should have recovered sufficiently to make his way back to his brother's home.

About midnight we were roused up by the most fearful bellowing from the river's bank, a few yards from our tents, and I had just seized my revolver, expecting an attack from some unknown wild beast, when I was re-assured by the voice of my sick companion, saying he "Reckoned it was only the 'gators." I had never before heard the voice of the alligator, and was much surprised to find the animal could give out such loud and formidable sounds. As we had pitched our tents between the river and the pool full of small alligators, we concluded that the parents were anxious to visit their offspring in the pool, but

were too much afraid of our tents to cross the intervening land, so they lay on the river-bank bellowing. Whatever the cause of the noise may have been, the effect was an almost sleepless night to us, as the brutes never ceased till just before dawn, when we had to turn out and light the fire for breakfast.

A cold fog hung over the water as we again embarked in the canoe, but disappeared as the sun mounted above the horizon, and soon shone down on us with a heat which the light westerly breeze alone made endurable. Increasing in width as we paddled down, the river became more thickly studded with islands covered with mangrove or cedar-swamp and grass. On our right, pine-trees stretched back as far as we could see; on the left, red-cedar, cabbage-palm, and Spanish bayonet (yucca), clothed the bank, which occasionally disappeared in a vast rushy swamp stretching back to the distant prairie. At mid-day we stopped to rest and dine on a mangrove islet, where the number of snakes in the long grass made us keep carefully near the sandy beach. Lighting a fire on the edge of the grass and the sand, we pro-

ceeded to cook our dinner, keeping well to windward, and allowing the flames to spread to leeward, in the hope of roasting some of the snakes. The coffee was just boiled, the hominy cooked, and the bacon and fish nicely fried, when the wind chopped round, and in a moment down came the roaring flames right on top of us. We had just time to snatch up our fire-arms, throw a few articles lying about into the canoe, and shove off into the river, leaving our dinner to its fate, and glad to escape the roasting we had thought to inflict on the snakes. When the fire had passed, we returned to seek our pots and pans, and then selected a safer spot where we cooked a hurried meal; after which we again embarked, as we had far to travel before sunset.

I think our tempers were more tried by this sudden loss of our dinner and quiet pipe afterwards, than by any of the greater and far more serious hardships we went through during any part of our travels in Florida. We always looked forward to our mid-day meal and hour of rest in the shade, with a good supply of real "Lone Jack" tobacco, as one of the few bits of luxury

obtainable in our wandering life. Our breakfasts being taken long before sunrise, were cold and hurried; and after supper we were generally too tired with the day's work to enjoy anything but such rest as the mosquitoes and sand-flies permitted. At mid-day we could avoid these pests by keeping in the open, as they cannot stand the full blaze of the sun, or remain in such shady spots as are open to the fresh day breezes.

The cloud of smoke that rose behind us, as we paddled on, somewhat comforted us with the thought that our enemies the snakes and mosquitoes were suffering, and the difficulty of navigation we soon experienced drove out the last thoughts of the lost dinner. Keeping near the left bank, by direction of our guide, the river became so wide that we altogether lost sight of the right bank. On our left, a mangrove swamp extended back for miles to a distant ridge of pine, and our guide informed us we must seek for a water passage through the swamp, which he had been told by the Indians existed, but with the exact locality of which he was unacquainted. It would, he said, be impossible

to follow the natural course of the river and round the mangrove point at the mouth, into Charlotte Harbour, as the sea there would certainly sink our heavily laden canoe.

Following this advice, we entered the first opening we could perceive in the mangroves, but it turned out to be only a long blind bayou, so we were obliged to retrace our course into the main river. The second opening we attempted, branched out into narrow arms of deep black water, extending in every direction through the swamp, and forming innumerable islets, and many blind bayous without any outlet like the first we had tried.

Twisting and turning in every direction, we followed what appeared to be the deepest channel, till we had penetrated to the centre of the swamp, where the mangroves were scattered about through the water in such a manner that we could no longer discover any practicable passage. Seeing, on one of the islets which rose a few inches above the water, the white trunk and branches of a dead tree towering high above the mangroves, we made our way as near as we could get to it, and one of us climbing up so as to overlook the islands, discovered a thin

line of water extending some distance further through the swamp. Repeating the operation several times when completely at fault, we were at length hailed by M——, who this time had been sent aloft, with the cheering intelligence that a few hundred yards further we should find ourselves in open water. This proved to be the case, and emerging from the horrid gloom of the swamp, we found ourselves in a bay apparently about six miles in width, on the opposite shore of which we could just distinguish two frame houses standing out from a background of pines, forming part of the settlement of Hickory Bluff, on the north or right bank of Pease Creek.

The sun was now getting low, and a broad bay lay before us, by crossing which we could reach the settlement by sun-down, but ran the risk of being swamped as a fresh breeze was blowing and creating a considerable sea. On the other hand, by coasting round the bay, we could remain in comparatively smooth and shallow water, but would be forced to camp out at night on the edge of the great mangrove swamp, which would have been certain death to our sick guide. Though the poor fellow besought

us not to risk crossing, we determined to try it; so charging M——, who paddled in the bows, instantly to obey orders, I turned the boat's head seaward and we soon put a couple of miles of water between us and the shore. As we got further out we found a strong tide running, which, with the wind against it, raised a sea that every moment threatened to swamp us. It was only by watching every wave, and altering the trimming of the canoe accordingly, that we managed to keep afloat, M—— and I working our paddles with an energy that made the sweat pour off us, but kept us well before the waves.

Looking down through the clear water, we could see such shoals of monster fish as made us tremble to think what our fate would be should the waves, which occasionally broke over our gunwale, swamp us. Sharks, saw-fish, jew-fish, sting-rays, whip-rays, devil-fish and other unknown monsters of enormous size, swam below and around us in such numbers that they bumped against our bottom threatening to upset us, and impeded the play of our paddles in the water. I have no doubt such a statement may appear incredible, but it is no less a fact, and fish

exist in Charlotte Harbour of such size, and in such numbers, as I could not have believed existed in any part of the world, had I not myself seen them.

As quickly as we could paddle we crossed the rough open bay, and reaching the opposite shore, lost no time in hauling up the canoe on the beach to empty her before proceeding, as though we had only a couple of miles more to reach the Bluff, she had too much water in her to float a quarter of that distance.

Having emptied the canoe and re-stowed the cargo and passengers, we coasted along the shore, which was high and covered with palmetto and cabbage-palm. Soon we reached the remains of a long wooden pier destroyed by the October hurricane, at the land end of which stood the frame house of a settler named Platt; a little further on, by the mouth of a small creek, we found a spot where the palmetto grew far enough back from the sandy beach to allow room for our camp. There we ran the canoe up on the beach and unloaded her for the last time; having pitched our camp, we brought our sick guide up to Mr.

Platt's house, where he was kindly received and promised to be taken care of, until able to return home or obtain some employment he was in search of.

CHAPTER X.

PEASE CREEK—SETTLEMENT OF HICKORY BLUFF—THE PLATT FAMILY — CONTEMPLATING MATRIMONY—THE PIONEERS OF CIVILIZATION — UNTHRIFTINESS OF FLORIDA SETTLERS — DYSENTERY AND ITS CURE—FISHING—NATIVE OBJECTION TO BATHING—AN EX-NEGRO LEADER—ENGAGE PASSAGE FOR PUNTA RASSA—ON BOARD THE 'SANTA MARIA'—OUR CARGO —COCKROACHES—NIGHT AND MORNING—CHARLOTTE HARBOUR—PINE ISLAND—OLD MAN BROWN—LANDING HOGS—THE "GRAINS"—AGROUND ON AN OYSTER BAR—CARRAHO KEY—CAPTAIN JOCELYN THE PIRATE—AN ANXIOUS NIGHT—AFLOAT AT LAST—CORMORANTS AND FISH—SPANISH FISHERMEN — THE TELEGRAPH STATION — TWO SHIVERING WANDERERS.

PEASE CREEK, formerly known by its Indian name of Talahkchopko, is the principal river of Manatee County, through which it flows from north to south, rising among the

swamps and draining the lakes in Polk County, north of Manatee. Its length is about a hundred miles from the lakes to Charlotte Harbour, but it is so shallow that it is navigable for schooners of light draught only about sixteen miles above the harbour.

Mangrove swamps fringe the shores above Hickory Bluff, behind them is a belt of pine and cabbage-palm and behind that the usual palmetto prairie. A few settlers, residing in frame or log-houses, are scattered at long intervals along the banks, owning small herds of cattle and hogs, but appearing generally very poor.

There are no stores at the little settlement of Hickory Bluff; the nearest store is twelve miles distant up the Creek, the owner of which, fearing no opposition, charges his own prices, and to judge by comparison must be doing a profitable business. Opposite the Bluff, where the Creek is about two miles in width, some Northern gentlemen have erected houses for themselves, where they can hunt during the season. Bears and panthers are still numerous in the swamps, every species of wild fowl abounds, and fish, as I have already mentioned, swim in the bay in incredible numbers, so that a

sportsman might choose worse quarters to winter in.

The settlement at present consists of the Platt family living in two frame-houses, about a quarter of a mile apart, while a third house situated between these two was in process of construction by another member of the same family. Seeing this young Platt working away at his half-finished house, I asked him had he no assistance in his work. No, he answered, he reckoned not, there was nobody to help him, the planks had been cut at a saw-mill about three miles distant and brought there by water, all the rest of the work he had done himself. He had cut down the trees, cleared away the palmetto roots, nailed every plank, and done every bit of carpentering, joining, sawing, &c., with his own hands. I remarked it must be slow and very hard work,

"Well," he said, "I reckon that is so, 'specially as I never learned the business; you bet it's taken me some time, nigh a year, but I'll finish it next Fall. H—ll take these cussed bugs!" It was a warm evening, with a southerly wind which carried clouds of mosquitoes and sandflies from the

swamps near, under the vicious attacks of which "bugs" we were both bleeding freely.

The young fellow was, I was informed, contemplating matrimony, and was now erecting a house to which he might bring his bride. The land was there, he had but to take it, and the house, though rudely constructed, would suffice for such a warm climate as that of Southern Florida. Life may be hard to these pioneers of civilization, but they certainly have the advantage over the dwellers in settled countries in one respect, namely, that children, instead of an expense, are an advantage to them, or, if they are not, the cause does not lie in the want of profitable employment for any number they may be blessed with. In South Florida, however, little advantage is taken of the natural resources of the country, most of the settlers appearing contented to live in a state of extreme poverty.

Though the estuaries and rivers contain fish enough to feed the whole Union of North America, I never heard of any attempts being made to catch and preserve them for export. I saw a small boy close to our camp at Hickory Bluff harpooning fish

in such numbers that the boat was half full in a few minutes, and he informed me the fish were to feed the pigs and dogs. I never saw fish on any of the settlers' tables, only abominably bad bacon and hominy. Oysters of the finest quality, and clams are as abundant as the fish, yet they will not take the trouble to gather them; vegetables of every sort grow well, yet I never saw any at table, except cabbage and potatoes, sweet and Irish, and those rarely.

Most of the settlers are Southerners from the swamps of Louisiana, from Georgia and the Carolinas, and there is certainly a want of energy and enterprise among them that strikes a stranger. Of course, there are exceptions, but I speak of the general rule, and my experience extended over nearly every settlement in Southern Florida. For this lack of energy, however, the climate must be held partly responsible, as it is debilitating to a degree that renders the slightest exertion distasteful.

A little patch of land sown with Indian corn, and a small garden with a few stunted orange and guava trees, was all the cultivation seen near the houses of

the settlers on Hickory Bluff. Dysentery and fever, they told us, had been very prevalent latterly, and they had all suffered from it. Rum and sugar boiled together was considered the best remedy for dysentery, and our sick guide declared himself much revived by several strong doses of it, though the benefit unhappily proved to be only temporary.

We were able to keep our camp on the beach well supplied with fish of the most excellent quality, without the slightest trouble. Baiting with the land-crabs, that abounded in a mangrove swamp close by, in ten minutes we could catch enough red fish, dark-fleshed jack, and black and white banded sheep's heads to feed the settlement—a fortunate circumstance, as we could procure no supplies whatever nearer than the store, twelve miles up the Creek. We were able to bathe in tolerable security every morning, as the alligators do not venture so near a settlement or into such salt water. We had, however, to keep a good look-out for sharks, and dared not swim out into deep water. The natives throughout Florida could never understand our taste for daily bathing, assuring us we ran the

risk of severe colds and rheumatism, a risk they apparently carefully avoided themselves.

As the character of the country in the neighbourhood of the Bluff did not permit of deer-stalking, and we could obtain no dogs for bear or panther hunting—a Mr. De Costa, revenue officer and ex-captain of a negro company, who lived near the Bluff, and owned some good bear dogs, refusing to lend them or hunt himself—we determined to take passage on board the first schooner we could find, trading with hogs or cattle from Pease Creek, to any point South of Charlotte Harbour to which they would convey us.

Hearing that a small schooner which lay at anchor by the wooden pier near our camp was loading with hogs for the Island of Key West, we interviewed the skipper, and agreed with him to be conveyed to Punta Rassa, on the Caloosahatchee river, some distance south of Charlotte Harbour, where we heard game was plentiful, both feathered and four-footed. Bidding farewell to our sick guide at midnight, on March 7th, we proceeded on board the schooner "Santa Maria," and soon after, when a brilliant moon rose up and dispelled

the darkness, anchor was weighed, and we dropped quietly down with the ebb-tide. A light westerly breeze bore us quickly down the creek into the magnificent bay called Charlotte Harbour, and soon the low shores of Manatee County were but streaks in the silvery moonlight, the south star alone serving to guide our skipper's course in the absence of any mariner's compass.

The "Santa Maria" schooner was about twenty-five tons burden, nearly as broad as she was long, very flat-bottomed, very rotten, and very dirty. The crew consisted of an old man and a boy, commanded by a skipper who turned out a very good fellow. Hogs and button-wood formed our cargo, the latter being a species of mangrove, valuable for fire-wood, as it throws out an intense heat, and for cabinet-work, gun-barrels, &c., as it is hard, close-grained, and of a fine purple colour. Some land-turtles, called in Florida "gophers," which are common in the pine-woods round Pease Creek, formed part of our cargo, intended for sale at Key West.

The hogs, lean and half wild, were stowed in pens on deck destined, some to be landed on one

of the uninhabited islands or keys off the coast, the rest for the market at Key West. From the pens an abominable stench arose, and the cries of the fighting, struggling brutes never ceased throughout the night.

Towards morning I went into the little cabin, hoping to get a few hours' sleep, but in five minutes I was again on deck. Cockroaches three inches in length, with a strong partiality for human flesh, and myriads of hungry fleas, being more than I could stand; so lying down on my air-mattress in the stern, I tried to count the countless stars that shone down on us with a brilliancy never seen in our northern latitudes, and then slept till, stiff and cold, I was roused by our skipper to drink a cup of hot coffee, most acceptable in the chilly morning air.

Sunrise found us well down Charlotte Harbour, and about mid-day we anchored off the north-east end of Pine island, the largest of the numerous keys which stud the bay. Pine Island is twenty miles long, and from two to four broad; as its name implies it is thickly timbered with pine, and has also a good deal of oak, palm, and other mast-

bearing trees. Savannas intersect the woods, and are grazed by deer in considerable numbers, and turkeys are also numerous in the island. It has but one inhabitant, an old man of sixty, universally known in south-west Florida as "old man Brown." He leads a solitary life, cultivating oranges, lemons, bananas, guavas, cocoa-nuts, and other tropical fruits, of which he had the most flourishing plantation on the coast, until the October hurricane destroyed it. That fearful storm tore up half his fruit-trees, and nearly buried him in the ruins of his house; yet still the old man lives on alone, cultivating the surviving trees.

We added to the population of the island a dozen pigs, which squealed and bit savagely as we hoisted them overboard, soon disappearing in the forest after reaching the land. They were to remain and multiply at leisure, till the owner who lived at Pease Creek should choose to come and collect his property. After landing the hogs, our skipper suggested that we should secure fish enough for dinner before returning on board the schooner; so paddling quietly along under the shadow of the mangrove trees which fringe the island,

in a short space of time two red fish, of about twelve pounds weight each, lay struggling in the bottom of the boat, transfixed by a formidable species of harpoon called "grains," most skilfully wielded by the skipper standing in the bows of the boat.

These "grains" consist of a two-pronged iron head, barbed, about ten inches in length, and staff twelve feet long. The head is loosely slipped into a socket on the staff, and the two are connected by a cord. For killing turtle, a single-pronged, barbed iron head is used as it pierces the shell better, while for fish the double prong is more deadly. The harpooner lowers his weapon to the water when about to strike, and taking aim at fish or turtle floating either a few feet below or on the surface of the water, drives the steel deep into the body. The construction of the harpoon prevents its being shaken off by the struggles of the victim, as the shaft, slipping at once off the head, affords no leverage, and the steel head remains fixed, towing after it the long wooden shaft. A strong line then enables the harpooner to haul in the fish or turtle,

whatever its size, when exhausted by fruitless struggles.

After securing the fish for dinner we returned on board, and weighing anchor rounded the north-west point of Pine Island. Tacking about among the numerous little mangrove-covered islets, over some of which the water flowed at high tide, we rarely got a depth of more than five feet, and had to keep a sharp look out for banks and shoals.

Shortly before sunset, however, we suddenly ran hard and fast aground upon an oyster bar, numbers of which rise up to within a few feet of the surface of the water near this part of the coast. As the tide was falling fast, we could do nothing but wait till it should rise again sufficiently high to float us off. Meanwhile, we laid out cables and anchors to haul off by, and then devoted ourselves to fishing, collecting oysters, or shooting round the little islets.

About a mile from the oyster-bank on which we were stuck was a curious-shaped island, called Carraho Key, whose single inhabitant enjoys a

fame in Florida rivalling that of the most blood-thirsty pirate of the China seas. Professing to be an Englishman from Plymouth, he calls himself Captain Jocelyn, and some years ago settled down on this desolate island, nothing being known of his previous life. He built himself a house and a boat, and soon became the terror of the whole coast as a pirate and murderer. His plan was to invite any stranger he might hear of on the main-land to visit him in his island-home, and convey him thither in his own boat, when the unfortunate passenger would never again be heard of—Captain Jocelyn invariably saying that the boom of his main-sail had knocked the man overboard and drowned him. Spanish fishermen, too, who resort to these islands in the fishing-season, had been lured to the murderer's den, and never seen more.

At least four strangers, and more than one unfortunate Spanish fisherman were well-known to have disappeared thus. He was also said to board craft run aground like ourselves, and, cutting the throats of the sleeping crew, to seize all valuables and scuttle the craft. I asked our

skipper why they did not shoot such a villain, and thus stop his piracy and murder, but could get no satisfactory reason for not doing so, except that the man inspired so much terror that nobody dared to kill him.

I had the honour of meeting this pirate of the Gulf a few days afterwards at the Telegraph station at Punta Rassa, where he landed in his little cutter, and a more cut-throat-looking desperado I never beheld. Apparently between forty-five and fifty-five years of age, of medium height, very strongly built, with long black hair and beard, and flashing black eyes shaded by heavy eyebrows, he was quite the beau-ideal of a pirate, and his dress and arms fully kept up the character. He wore a blue flannel shirt and a ragged pair of pants tucked into long sea-boots, a red leather belt round his waist containing a revolver and long knife, and carried a rusty old rifle which he never let out of his hands.

Knowing that such a pleasant character was in our neighbourhood, we kept a careful watch all night; nor was there much temptation to sleep, the flood-tide bringing up a swell from the Gulf

which nearly knocked the old "Santa Maria" to pieces, as we bumped heavily on the sharp oyster shells, yet had not water enough to float off the bar. By daylight we were again firmly aground, and under such circumstances daylight was not unwelcome, as we had had anything but a pleasant night of it. It was not until the afternoon that the tide rose sufficiently to enable us to haul off the schooner by means of the anchors we had laid out, when after twenty hours on the oyster bank, we again made sail and bore away for Boca Ciaga, the most southern of the passages into the Gulf.

The water was covered with thousands of the Florida cormorant, a small species which breed in enormous numbers in the mangrove islets, while ospreys and pelicans kept up an incessant splash as with closed wings they darted down among the mass of these birds. All these were feeding on great shoals of mullet which rushed along the surface of the water, endeavouring to escape the attacks of porpoises, sharks and other voracious pursuers beneath the surface of the water.

Keeping to the east, or inside the large keys

called Gasparilla, Lacosta, Captiva, and Sanibel, between which are the Bocas or passages into the Gulf, we passed hundreds of little nameless and uninhabited keys. On some of the larger islands we saw the palmetto-leaf huts of the Spanish fishermen who come over from Cuba at certain times when the fish are in season, and taking up their residence on these uninhabited keys, catch and cure an immense quantity of fish, with which they return to their own country. As the native Americans do not fish on these coasts, except for sponges, the Spaniards have it all their own way, but are obliged to pursue their occupation in American bottoms, as foreign vessels are not permitted to fish within a certain distance of the shore.

About two hours before sunrise, on the third day after our departure from Pease Creek, we dropped anchor off the Telegraph station at Punta Rassa—the flat point—and having been landed with our baggage on the white sandy beach, the "Santa Maria" again set sail, bound for Key West.

Thus we were left, M—— and I, two shivering strangers wandering about the beach in the cold dark hours preceding the dawn of day, quite

uncertain what reception we might meet with from the inhabitants of the Telegraph station, to whom our appearance must be as sudden and unexpected as though we had dropped from the clouds.

CHAPTER XI.

TELEGRAPH STATION AT PUNTA RASSA—A FRENCH COOK—A "BOSS" CLERK AND HIS WELCOME—STAFF OF TELEGRAPH COMPANY—VISITORS—GALLEY NIPPERS—FORT DULANEY—THE OCTOBER HURRICANE — FISHERMEN'S KEY — CATTLE SHIPPING—THE CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER—FORT MYERS——CAPTAIN HENRY—THE LARGEST CATTLE OWNER IN FLORIDA—LAKE THOMPSON—BEST ROUTE TO OKECHOBEE—SULPHUR SPRING—TRADE WITH INDIANS—"HIS REVERENCE" FROM GEORGIA—PROSPECTING FOR IRON—THE CORKSCREW RIVER—CAMPED IN A BARN—SANIBEL ISLAND—RARE SHELLS—MOSQUITOES—SCARCITY OF WATER—A MANGROVE SWAMP—OCELOT-HUNTING—ATTACKED BY MOSQUITOES—SWAMP FEVER—MOLUCCA CRABS—ACTIVITY OF FISH—INTRODUCTION TO CAPTAIN JOCELYN—DEPARTURE FOR KEY WEST.

N enormous wooden barn, seventy-five feet by fifty, resting on wooden piles twenty feet above a small plateau, which rose a few feet above the level of the sea; in front

of it a white sandy beach, extending round the point formed by the plateau ; behind, at a few yards' distance, a dismal mangrove swamp reaching back as far as we could see. Such was the character and situation of the building forming the land-terminus of the Cuban Telegraph cable, at the foot of the wooden steps leading up to which M—— and I sat patiently waiting till the door should be opened and some signs of life appear.

At last, as the sky began to redden in the east, the huge door of the barn was thrown wide open, and a little man in flannel shirt and trousers, with an axe in his hand, began to descend the steps. Seeing two Britishers quietly seated smoking their pipes on a heap of baggage and guns at the foot of the steps, the little man stopped and ejaculating "Sapristi," stared at us in blank amazement. Bidding him good morning, we accounted for our sudden appearance, and in return learned that he was a French American from New Orleans, and cook to the station, where the Company permitted any passing strangers to take up temporary quarters.

Quickly making friends with such an important

person as the cook, we received the welcome intelligence that breakfast would be prepared for us as soon as he had chopped wood, lit the fire and could get the dishes ready. One by one the clerks appeared from their rooms, and then the "Boss," or head-clerk, whose welcome to us was certainly more remarkable for its Yankee brevity than for its cordiality. Could we put up there for a day or two? we asked. He guessed we could. Might we have our meals there? He guessed we might. Should we inconvenience him by pitching our tents in the barn? He guessed not; and then expectorating freely he turned on his heel and retired into a little canvas office, where the telegraph-needle could be heard clicking violently.

Two telegraph clerks, and two men employed by the meteorological department of the War Office, with the head-clerk and his wife, and the cook, formed the total of residents in the station at Punta Rassa. All strangers are at liberty to lay down their blankets in the barn at night, or pitch their tents between the rafters, as we did. A fixed sum is charged for the food provided, consisting of vension, pork, salt beef, fish, &c.; a dollar and a

half a day each being what we paid for three excellent meals.

Stock-owners shipping cattle for Key West or Cuba, carpenters employed on some building connected with a cattle-wharf close by, and settlers from the settlement at Fort Myers, used to drop in every evening for a meal, and then spread their blankets on the floor under the shelter of mosquito bars or curtains, whence there soon proceeded such a vigorous snoring as showed the occupants were no strangers to a hard bed.

Mosquitoes make it impossible to camp in the swamp of Punta Rassa; even cattle and horses are unable to exist in its vicinity, being worried to death by the ferocity of these insects; and throughout Florida the place has a bad name, from the swarms of these accursed "galley-nippers."

Except the Telegraph station and a few huts constructed of palmetto-leaves and inhabited during the fishing season by Spanish fishermen, there is no settlement at Punta Rassa. The station occupies the site of the old Fort Dulaney, the double ditches which defended the fort during the Indian wars being still visible between the plateau and the

swamp. During the last great October hurricane the sea swept over the whole Point, the swamp and the adjacent islands, driving every living soul to seek refuge in the station where they passed a fearful night, the water rising within a few inches of the floor of the barn and threatening to sweep all before it, but fortunately subsiding as soon as the hurricane abated.

On a small island called Fisherman's Key, exactly opposite the Telegraph station, a Swede, named Smith, has built a little wooden shanty, where he lives with his wife and family, supporting himself by boarding chance visitors, shipping oysters to Key West and Cuba, and shooting the deer that are found on the keys. A handsome, honest and pleasant a fellow as any in Florida, Smith took me over in his boat to visit his island-home and taste his oysters, gathered from an oyster-bed in the bay. Better oysters I never tasted in any part of America, but my enjoyment of the repast was sadly interfered with by the persecution of the sand-flies that filled Smith's house.

A short distance above the Point is a long wooden pier used for shipping cattle, and strong pens at the

shore end—while a house nearly as large as the Telegraph station, and similarly raised on piles, is being constructed to house the stock-owners and drivers when at the Point. Large numbers of cattle are shipped from Punta Rassa, chiefly to Cuba, a good-sized steamer and several schooners being employed in the trade. The cattle are fed on the great interior prairies and savannas, and are owned mostly by settlers at Fort Myers, twenty-two miles higher up the Caloosahatchee river, the only settlement on the mainland of Monroe County.

Wishing to visit this settlement, we engaged a sailing boat from a Spanish fisherman named Antonio, who agreed for the sum of seven dollars to convey us up the river to Fort Myers. Above the Point the river has an average width of a mile and a half, and is studded with low mangrove-clad islets, with which trees the shores also are fringed. On approaching Fort Myers the banks grow somewhat higher, the houses of the settlement being situated on a pine bluff, some feet above the river. Three stores and some settlers' frame-houses constitute the settlement, the principal inhabitant of which is Captain Henry, the largest stock-owner in Southern

Florida. This gentleman owns some forty thousand head of cattle, and has the character of being a keen sportsman as well as a wealthy man. Unfortunately, just at this time he was absent collecting cattle in the interior, so we did not make his acquaintance; but we were happy in meeting his brother-in-law, Mr. Thompson, who gave us a cordial invitation to his house, and promised if we could come out earlier next season to accompany us with boat, waggon, and dogs to Fort Thompson and Lakes Hickpochee and Okechobee.

It had been our intention, on this occasion, to visit the Fort and Lakes above-named, but Mr. Thompson assured us that the season was now (March 12th) too far advanced to make this expedition, as in the present hot weather the mosquitoes were unbearable and deer out of season. Besides which, all hands were now busy collecting, numbering, and branding the cattle, on which a tax is levied, on the prairies in the interior of Manatee and Monroe Counties. Boats, he said, could ascend the Caloosahatchee river as far as Fort Thompson on the lake of the same name, to which place there is also a practicable waggon-track. Round this lake he had enjoyed excellent hunting,

the country being admirably adapted for that purpose, as it is timbered with cabbage-palm, oak and other trees, and provided with savannas, good water and dry camping-ground; but eastward there is neither good hunting nor dry ground.

From Fort Thompson there is a waggon-track to Fort Centre, an abandoned military post during the Indian wars, situated about twenty-five miles N.N.E. of the former fort, across the open prairie. From Fort Centre, a creek navigable for boats of light draught flows into Lake Okechobee, and forms the only practicable approach to that swamp-surrounded lake, except by the Kissimmee river which flows in on the North.

Near Fort Myers is a nitre and sulphur-spring, the medicinal properties of which are however of no avail to keep off fever and dysentery, which was very prevalent in the settlement. At the stores a considerable trade is done with the Indians, who resort thither from the southern part of the county and Everglades to barter skins for whiskey, tobacco, and beads. There is but little cultivated land in the neighbourhood, cattle forming the staple wealth of the community.

At this time we were joined by a reverend gentleman named Doctor Hicks, of Augusta, Georgia, who had travelled with us down the coast from Cedar Keys to Tampa, and accompanied us during the rest of our travels in Florida. While we were hunting in Manatee, he had been engaged prospecting the country south of Fort Myers, in Monroe County, down to the Corkscrew river and Caximbas Bay, in search of minerals, of which he had collected several specimens, principally iron. On the Corkscrew river he had found large quantities of iron, chiefly in sandstone, from the specimens of which, when smelted on our return to Jacksonville, sixty per cent of pure iron was obtained, the iron proving magnetic after smelting. His account of the character of the country he had travelled through proved almost identical with that we had ourselves traversed, mosquitoes, snakes, and fevers being equally abundant. Deer and turkeys were the only game his party had come across, nor were they at all numerous.

At Punta Rassa we determined to remain camped in the Telegraph barn, until a cattle-steamer which was daily expected should arrive and convey us all

to the island of Key West. Meanwhile we made various excursions about the river, bay, and islands, including one to Sanibel Island, the shores of which were covered with shells of many rare varieties. The island is long, low, and narrow, about three miles distant from the Point seaward, and is entirely uninhabited. Landing on the Eastern shore, we found the entire beach was composed of various sorts of shells, some ground to pieces, others perfect, but few of any rare species. On the Western or Gulf shore, the beach was composed of sand, but thickly covered with shells, cones, panamas, scallops, conches, harp, fig, and frog-shells, olive-banded Venus-shells, and many other sorts of the most brilliant colouring and graceful shapes, which we found lying about in such extraordinary numbers that we soon collected as many as we could carry.

In the middle of the island sea-shells were nearly as plentiful as on the shore, the sea having made a clean sweep over it during the October hurricane. Though it was a distance of only about five hundred yards from shore to shore, where we crossed from the eastern to the western side of the island, and all trees had been cut down and scrub cleared away for

the Cuban telegraph cable, which was carried across the island at that spot, by the time we reached the Gulf shore we were covered from head to foot with mosquitoes, which bit savagely through all our clothing, and stuck to us till blown away by the fresh Gulf breezes which swept the beach. Until the land is ploughed up and cultivated, so as to destroy the eggs of these insects, Sanibel, as well as most of the other keys, must remain uninhabited by man during all but the coldest months, December and January.

The evening of our return to Punta Rassa from Sanibel, we had the second rain-storm which we had seen since our arrival in Florida, the first being the short fall when camped in the Myakka swamp. The sky had frequently been covered with heavy, black masses of cloud, leading us to expect rain; but, as if by magic, the clouds would vanish without a drop of rain falling, and the sun again shine out in a cloudless sky. I never visited a country where one could so little judge what weather was likely to ensue from the appearance of the sky.

Unfortunately, this last rain-fall was of very short duration, and added but little to the supply of fresh

water which was running very short. Depending entirely on rain-water collected in a large tank, the long draught was causing great anxiety at Punta Rassa, where the wells are brackish and the water unfit for drinking or cooking purposes, and there are no fresh-water creeks within a distance of many miles.

Deer, pumas, ocelots, racoons and turkeys all abound in the mangrove swamp which extends back from the station to the prairie. So one morning I turned out of bed long before daylight, in order to avoid the mosquitoes, and made my way along a sandy ridge on which cabbage-palm, palmetto, live-oak, and sea-grape grew, with grass beneath, affording feeding-ground for the game, and extending from the Point into the middle of the swamp. Dark lagoons full of noxious reptiles bordered the ridge, beyond which I trudged through the black ooze under the mangrove trees, Following the game "sign," the footprints of the various wild beasts, visible in sand and mud in unusual abundance, led me right into the thickest part of the swamp.

I think the whole face of the earth can produce

nothing more horribly repulsive in appearance than a dense mangrove swamp; it is impossible to look around without shuddering. The deadly malaria lurks in many a fair spot in tropical countries, but it is borne on a breeze whose breath is sweet with the scent of flowers, and musical with the song of birds. In the gloomy recesses of the mangrove swamp, malaria finds a home which forms the very ideal of the abode of death, whose grim presence seems almost as visible to the eye as the odour of decay is sickening to the senses. Among the tangled mass of roots and boughs, scarcely distinguishable in the strange growth of the mangrove tree, snakes abound and venomous insects swarm. Instead of song-birds, the buzzard and the eagle build in its solitudes, while the lynx, the puma, the ocelot, and the bear find in the mangrove swamp a safe retreat from the pursuit of man.

Shaking off the feeling of loathing which crept over me as I contemplated the surrounding swamp, I fixed my whole attention on the search after game, and before sunrise had succeeded in shooting an ocelot. I was then following up some fresh

bear-tracks, when the sun appeared, and almost directly such a swarm of mosquitoes attacked me that I had to run as fast as the nature of the ground would permit to the nearest part of the sea-shore, where I arrived with hands and face streaming with blood, though protected by gloves and a veil. There the sea-breeze soon freed me from my tormentors, and I was able to stroll quietly home by following the windings of the beach.

That evening I was attacked with chills and fever, on which quinine had but little effect for some days, until I got away to sea and rapidly threw off the fever. With the exception of this slight attack, neither M—— nor I had a day's sickness while in Florida. The beach at Punta Rassa consisted of the most beautiful white silver sand, extending for many miles down the coast, on which rare seaweeds had been cast up by gales to the depth of several inches. Among them the little fiddler and purple land-crabs abounded, and also great numbers of the curious horse-shoe shells of the long-tailed molucca crab, the sharp, spiked tail, and formidable row of teeth in front, giving it

the appearance of a dangerous enemy, altogether at variance with its really harmless character. When pulled out of the water on to the shore, it was surprising to see with what rapidity these crabs burrowed in the sand, till the shell was nearly covered, as they cannot stand the heat of the sun, nor when turned on their backs can they right themselves, though making use of their spiked tail as a lever. Among the sea-weed there were, however, some dangerous animals, as one day, when unmooring our boat from a stake on the beach to which it was fastened, the sea-weed moved under my hand, and a ground rattlesnake glided out, which we soon captured, and consigned to a bottle filled with whiskey.

One of the most remarked characteristics of the estuaries of the Florida rivers is the activity of the fish with which they swarm. Sting-rays and whip-rays of huge size may constantly be seen leaping out of the water and alighting again with a splash audible a mile off, while the mullet spring as though gifted with wings, clearing an amazing distance at each leap. These latter fish were unfit for food during our stay in Florida, though at certain seasons

of the year they are said to be excellent, and are caught and sun-dried in large numbers by the Spanish fishermen.

Between fishing, shooting, and sailing, we had plenty of pleasant occupation at Punta Rassa, including an introduction to the famous free-booter, Captain Jocelyn, who arrived one evening in his cutter, as I have already mentioned. The ostensible purpose of his visit was to convey some flamingoes' wings and Irish potatoes as a present to the "Boss wife" at the station, but it was shrewdly suspected that his real purpose was to look after us, as our arrival was now well known throughout that section of the country.

As I could not shake off the swamp-fever, and the mosquitoes were dreadfully annoying, we were extremely anxious to get away from the Point, and many times a day turned our eyes seaward in the hope of discerning a long-expected cattle-steamer, which was nearly a fortnight overdue, though under contract to run the mails between Tampa and the settlements on the Caloosahatchee river.

At last, on the morning of the 15th March, a

black line of smoke appeared behind Sanibel Island, and soon a steamer rounded the Point and dropped anchor in the bay, outside the bar of the river. A boat then put off, and pulled up to the Telegraph station with mail-bags &c., for the *employés*. When they were landed, we put out to the steamer, and scrambling up her tall sides, were taken on board. Soon after the anchor was hove, and we steamed away with a fair tide, bound for Key West, an island situated about a hundred and thirty miles due south of Punta Rassa.

CHAPTER XII.

THE "VALLEY CITY"—PASSENGERS AND CARGO—RELIGION OF SETTLERS—DOWN THE GULF—THE HOME OF THE CORAL INSECT—REACH KEY WEST—ORIGIN OF NAME—ISLAND AND TOWN—THE AMERICAN FLEET—DESERTERS—FORTIFICATIONS OF THE ISLAND—GREAT HEAT—NATURAL WOODS—EVENING RAMBLES—CREOLE IMMIGRANTS—CIGAR MANUFACTORY—OCCUPATION OF INHABITANTS—WRECKING—CHARACTER OF THE NEGRO—NO FRESH WATER—PRICE OF PROVISIONS AND LODGING—PASSPORTS—START FOR CUBA.

THE steam ship "Valley City," on board of which we found ourselves, was a screw of about six hundred tons burden, plying up and down the coast between Tampa and Key West, at irregular intervals touching at Manatee and Punta Rassa "en route," and occasionally extending her voyage south to

Havana and north to Cedar Keys. Her freight consisted of a hundred head of cattle from Tampa bound to Cuba—Spain, the mate called it—and some hogs; she had cabin accommodation for about fourteen first class passengers, and was clean and comfortable enough.

Among her passengers was a Roman Catholic priest, who informed me that he was stationed at Tampa, and was now proceeding to visit the settlements on the various keys round the coast, and at Miami on Biscayne Bay. He said there were very few settlers of his religion in South Florida, far fewer than he had been led to expect, a statement quite in accordance with my own experience, as nearly all the settlers I met were what we call in England "Dissenters," chiefly Methodists.

With just breeze enough to make the temperature —about 85° Fahrenheit in the shade—enjoyable, we coasted the flat mangrove-covered islands and shores of Monroe County as far as Cape Romano, which we reached just as the sun sank below the opaque blue waves of the Gulf of Mexico. This very remarkable light milky blue colour of the Gulf water is said to

be caused by the action of the waves on the coral reefs, which during storms grind into powder the homes of the coral insect, and scatter the débris far and wide till the whole waters of the Gulf are whitened.

At daylight in the morning after leaving the Caloosahatchee river, we found ourselves among the low group of mangrove islands of which Key West is the most westerly of any size. In a couple of hours more we were moored alongside the wharf, where we engaged the services of a negro and cart to convey our baggage to the St. James's Hotel, a large wooden building in the principal street, where the accommodation appeared to us palatial after our experiences of camp-life in South Western Florida.

The name Key West is a corruption of that by which the Spaniards still designate the island Cayo Hueso, or Bone Key. It is about six miles long, by one mile wide, the town being situated on the northern or Gulf side of the western end. Its population has been so much increased by the immigration of refugee Creoles and negroes from Cuba, that it now numbers over nine thousand souls. Nearly all the houses

are frame, the streets are sand, and the side walks wood. Fine trees are planted in the principal streets and avenues, and many of the detached villa residences are nearly hidden in thick groves of cocoa-nut palms, laurels, magnolias and orange trees.

We found an unusual amount of stir and life in the place, owing to the presence of the American fleet which had been anchored in the harbour and roads for some time, in consequence of the "Virginius" difficulty with Spain. Though every available war-ship on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States was collected at Key West, the sight failed to impress us with much respect for the naval strength of the great Republic. There were about thirty men-of-war, wooden vessels, some of them mounting very heavy guns, but the greater part we were informed were rotten, unseaworthy and very slow. There were also five monitors, wicked-looking craft with armoured turrets, very formidable for coast defence, but with too low free-board to venture far from land. Since first assembled at Key West, the crews had deserted in such numbers that there were hardly sufficient hands left to work

the ships. We heard of numbers of these deserters during our voyage to the Indian river, both on the mainland and on the islands ; while one of our party, who went over in a boat to explore one of the little keys a few miles from Key West, was very near being murdered by a gang of five of these runaways, who thought he had come for the purpose of capturing them.

Although the island of Key West is a naval station, and in a military point of view is considered of great importance as the key of the Gulf passage, its fortifications are by no means of a formidable description. The fort at the entrance to the harbour is an old-fashioned brick building, mounting several tiers of guns ; but its foundations have given way, large cracks appear in the face and modern heavy artillery would soon destroy it. Two other batteries, chiefly earthworks, are partially completed on the extreme northern and south-western extremities of the island, and are connected by a line of rails run through the scrub, but few guns are mounted as yet. I visited the various works, so speak from personal observation.

During our stay of a few days on the island we

found the heat very oppressive, the sun shining down on the sandy streets with such blazing heat that we could not venture to walk out until shortly before sunset. At that time we used to stroll along the rocky paths that are cut through the thick jungle growth covering all that part of the island over which the streets of the town and villas have not yet spread, though a great portion of this jungle is already marked out in lots, in anticipation of the growth of the town.

There is so little soil over the coralline limestone of which the island is composed, that the natural growth which consists of various sorts of cacti, tamarinds, gums and other tropical plants, rarely attains a height of more than twenty feet. The beauty of the foliage, however, compensates for the want of size, and the many lovely flowers seen growing beneath the shrubs, with cool breeze sufficient to keep off the mosquitoes, made our evening stroll or drive through these miniature forests very enjoyable. One of the nicest walks in the island, the seaward strand, is unfortunately spoilt, by being used as a shamble for slaughtering cattle, whose heads

and offal are left to rot on the beach and poison the air far and wide.

In the town we heard almost as much Spanish talked as English, but the physique of the speakers plainly showed that they were Creole or colonial-born Spaniards, degenerate descendants of one of the finest of European races. The Cubans settled in Key West are largely employed in the manufacture of cigars, of which there are about fifteen factories in the island. The leaf, which is grown in Cuba, or supposed to be so, is rolled at these factories into cigars, which are very good, though inferior to the genuine Havana production in everything except the price. The other industries of the island consist in a factory for canning pine-apples which are grown on some of the keys, and extensive salt-works where thirty thousand bushels of salt are annually made by solar evaporation.

The principal occupation of the inhabitants is sponging, turtling, and wrecking, all of which we had experience of afterwards during our cruise to the Indian river. A large number of sloops, as they call cutters, and schooners are thus engaged during a portion of the year, employing a number

of hands who have the character of being skilful and hardy sailors, notwithstanding the demoralizing tendency of the trade of "wrecking," *i.e.*, rescuing, and if possible conveying into port, for a certain amount of salvage, any of the numerous vessels which are annually cast away on the Florida reef, or driven ashore on the mainland or any of the scattered keys. A regular license is issued to the captains of sloops and schooners for this purpose, and a very profitable business done, owing to the dangerous character of the navigation of these seas, and the terrific hurricanes to which they are liable in Autumn.

That the character of "wrecker" should earn for some of those, who pursue the calling, a dubious reputation is but natural, as humanity and profit cannot always be cast in the same scale; and when found balanced against one another, it is no marvel that the latter should sometimes be allowed to draw the scale.

On the highest part of the island, which is only fifteen feet above the sea-level, is a light-house, near which, on the outskirts of the town, are a number of negro shanties, nearly a quarter of the

population being black or coloured. A lazy, idling, loafing, light-hearted set these Key West negroes seemed to be—the sound of their curious laughter, of songs, break-downs, and music continually resounding of an evening throughout the negro quarter. After sunset the piazza of the St. James' Hotel was thronged with naval officers from the fleet, who complained much of the dulness of the place, not without reason, as there are absolutely no amusements or occupation of any sort for a stranger in Key West, and the climate is hot and relaxing, though recommended for consumptive cases.

Fresh-water was becoming very scarce from the long drought, as all they have in the island is rain-water preserved in tanks, the wells sunk only affording brackish water unfit to drink. The price of provisions we found rather high, when laying in a stock for our voyage round to the east coast of Florida; but as all the necessaries of life are imported from New Orleans or New York, prices naturally are higher than one expects in such an out-of-the-way spot. At the St. James' Hotel the charge for board and lodging was three and a-half

dollars a day, which is rather in excess of the usual charge of hotels on the mainland, except in Jacksonville, where four to five dollars a day is the price at the leading hotels.

As Havana is only eighty-four miles distant from Key West, we determined to visit the "Pearl of the Antilles" before proceeding to the east coast of Florida; so, when the steam-ship "Margaret," from New Orleans for Cuba, arrived in Key West, we engaged a passage in her for Havana. Our guns, ammunition, and tents we stowed at the British Vice-Consulate, where we also obtained the necessary visas for our passports, without which document no strangers may enter Cuba.

We were fortunate enough to find that the British Vice-Consul himself, Mr. J. Philbrick, an American citizen and merchant, was to be our fellow-passenger, his intimate acquaintance with Cuba and agreeable company adding much to the pleasure of the "nice time" we had at Havana and Matanzas.

CHAPTER XIII.

FIRST SIGHT OF THE CUBAN HILLS—A ROMANTIC YANKEE—HAVANA HARBOUR—CUSTOM-HOUSE—HAVANA FROM THE SEA—INSIDE THE TOWN—STREETS, VEHICLES, AND BUILDINGS—LIFE BEHIND THE BARS—THE TACON THEATRE—SALVINI—OCCUPATIONS OF THE "UPPER TEN"—DETERIORATION OF THE CREOLE RACE—LIFE IN HAVANA—SOCIETY—PAPER-MONEY—PUBLIC BUILDINGS—PUBLIC GARDENS AND SQUARES—COUNTRY SEAT OF THE CAPTAIN-GENERAL—CUBAN VILLAS—NEW STREETS—THE MARKET—THE CAMPO DE MARTE—REAL FABRICA DE TABACOS—EFFECT OF GUANO ON THE TOBACCO CROP—PRICES—THE HONRADEZ CIGARETTE FACTORY—HOT WEATHER AND COOL BREEZES—SCENES IN THE BAY AND ON SHORE—NOISE AND DRAINAGE—THE INSURGENTS—SPANIARD AND CREOLE—REGIMENTS FOR THE SEAT OF WAR.

LEAVING Key West in the afternoon of the 15th March, we met a strong south-easterly trade-wind outside the Keys, and at three A.M. the following morning hove-to off the harbour of Havana, to

wait until gun-fire, before which no foreign vessels are permitted to enter the bay.

It would be a cold nature, indeed, which could look for the first time on the Cuban hills entirely unmoved. As we rose and fell on the long swell of the Gulf, I watched the daylight breaking over the purple slopes, barren enough, save where some planter's house nestled in dark green groves of the royal palm. From the distant mountain ranges to the surf-beaten rocks, the colours changed from grey to blue, purple, and gold, as the dawn changed rapidly to daylight. Even the hard, practical nature of a New-England Yankee, who was standing at my elbow, was influenced by the scene, for as the sun rose and the morning-gun booming from the shore announced that we might enter the harbour, he ceased chewing for a moment while he thus spoke:

"Well, Sir, considering all the wickedness them Spaniards has committed since they come to the Indies, it's a wonder Almighty God hasn't drove them out of that beautiful island long ago. Guess it's about time Uncle Sam took that business in hand."

That Uncle Sam might find that business not quite as easy as my friend imagined, came into my mind, as I thought of the exhibition of America's naval power which I had just seen at Key West, and then looked up at the famous Morro Castle, bristling with artillery on the hill above us, and the numerous other forts and batteries on either hand which completely commanded the entrance to the harbour half a mile in length, and so narrow that only one ship can pass at a time.

The narrows passed, we were boarded by the health-officers and several police; then steaming slowly through a fleet of Spanish war-ships, we cast anchor near the head of the harbour. Selecting one of the small sail-boats with white awning, we stowed ourselves and baggage on board, and were conveyed to the custom-house, where we had to undergo the annoying formalities of baggage examination and a most rigid scrutiny of our passports. Being at last satisfied that we were not revolutionary adventurers, we were allowed to proceed to our hotel, and were soon comfortably housed at the San Carlos Hotel, admirably situated close to

the harbour and starting-place of the ferry boats, which run across to the principal railway station, on the other side of the bay.

Havana, as we first beheld it from the ship's deck, looked bright and sunny; its many-coloured houses, antique churches, and quaint old buildings—strongly reminding me of the mother-country—offered that picturesque variety to the eye which is so conspicuously wanting in the formal cities of the United States. By many Americans we had been told that, when once inside the town, we should find it mean and very expensive, while the stench, heat, and noise would be insupportable. Such was not, however, our experience of the place, as we spent ten most enjoyable days in Havana, though I think that time quite sufficient to see everything that is to be seen, nor do I suppose we should have cared to prolong our stay.

The streets are built to suit the heat of the climate, very narrow, paved with large stones, and bordered by grim-looking stone houses, seldom exceeding one story in height. The foot-ways are very narrow, usually about two feet in width, so that two pedestrians can scarcely pass one another, the inside

one being compelled to flatten himself against the wall, while the outside one is exposed to great danger from the wheels of passing vehicles. There are said to be six thousand cabs in Havana, small one horse Victorias, which dash about regardless of corners or foot passengers, and so frequently come into collision that a break-down excites no attention whatever. Omnibuses and tram-cars run through several streets, and the cheapness of locomotion is as remarkable as it is welcome in such a hot climate. Many of the streets are shaded by awnings stretched across from house to house, so as effectually to exclude the sun's rays and shade the shops which are all open in front.

Nearly every other shop is a "Fabrica de Tabacos" or "de Cigarros," and every soul seen in Havana, in the houses or in the streets, male or female, rich or poor, appears eternally smoking cigars or cigarettes; the annual amount of money spent on tobacco by a population numbering slightly over two hundred and twenty thousand has been calculated at nearly a million pounds sterling. Except in the hotels and a few of the most modern buildings, glass is unknown throughout Cuba. Iron

bars protect the windows which reach down to the ground, and during the greater portion of the day and night have neither blinds nor shutters. The domestic life of the occupants of the houses is therefore fully revealed to every passer by in the street, the effect being as novel to the stranger as it is sometimes startling. Havana is a most immoral city; there are streets of houses round the barred windows of which I have seen groups of men collected of an evening, their faces close pressed against the open iron bars, criticizing the fair occupants of the rooms, whose every action was perfectly visible to all loungers in the street as well as to those passing in carriages to or from the opera, theatre, or band.

We paid several visits to the Tacon theatre, where the Italian actor Salvini—one of the finest tragic actors ever seen on any stage—was playing in the "Morte Civile" and "Otello," supported by a very good Italian company. The theatre is one of the finest in the world, nearly as large as La Scala at Milan. The contrivances for cool air and ventilation are as good as they are necessary; the backs of all the boxes being lattice work, allow a

free current of air to pass in from the wide marble paved passages. These communicate with noble saloons where cigarettes are smoked between the acts, and iced drinks of every variety furnished for a small sum. Drinks, cabs and cigars were about the only cheap things we obtained in Havana.

When Salvini acted, the house was crowded from floor to roof, exhibiting whatever of rank, fashion and beauty Havana can boast. On other nights when not attracted by Salvini, the "upper ten" flocked to the Prado or public square, where sitting in carriages, often drawn up in rows four or five deep, they listened to the strains of a military band which played most evenings from eight to ten P.M. While the music lasted, the gardens and cafés round were thronged with men smoking and drinking; but the music and theatre over the crowds dispersed and apparently the natives retire to bed early, as we found the streets empty by midnight.

Remembering the handsome faces and graceful forms which used to fill the theatres, bull-rings and all places of public resort in Seville, Madrid and

other cities of the mother-country, I was much disappointed at the specimens of the Creole population of Havana which I saw. The men were puny, short and weak-limbed, the women sallow and unattractive; nor is this deterioration in race of the descendants of Spanish immigrants confined to the towns, but it is also conspicuous among the country-born Creoles, though in a less degree.

Life in Havana is almost entirely a male one, women are never seen by daylight except behind the iron bars of the windows, and during most hours of the twenty-four they must have a dreary time of it indeed. No lady who wishes to be considered respectable ever walks in the streets, so the occupation of the female portion of the household is limited to sitting in a circle opposite the bars of the windows talking, and, when the sun permits, looking out into the streets. Those who can afford it, drive or go to the play in the evening; those who cannot, sit still, gossiping round the window, or if they want exercise, promenade on the flat roof of their houses. The proportion of males to females is about three to one, but the numerical

superiority of the former appears to be ten times that amount, owing to this custom of the men alone appearing abroad, while the women remain shut up at home.

In Havana "society" there is not much of the blue blood of Spain, but a great deal of "shoddy" is very apparent, large fortunes being rapidly amassed by the grasping and unscrupulous Spanish settlers and merchants.

The difficulty of understanding a new currency is always considerable, but we found it utterly impossible to fix the relative value of the paper-money with which the market was flooded. On our arrival in Cuba the paper-dollar was at a discount of fifty per cent, a fortnight later the premium on gold rose to a hundred and fifty per cent. The merchants and hotel-keepers took care to alter their prices, so that each fall in the paper value became a gain to them, and if we offered English or American money, ten to twenty per cent below the value obtainable at the exchange offices was usually offered; nor did our experiences lead us to form a very favourable opinion of Cuban mercantile honour.

The public buildings of Havana are not attractive, the Cathedral is ugly outside, poor and tawdry within, but still looking old and venerable, and a striking picture when crowded with black-veiled worshippers, as I saw it one Sunday morning. Each lady was attended by a female slave, who carefully spread a carpet for her mistress to kneel on, giving the church the appearance of the interior of an Eastern mosque. The mausoleum of Columbus, with its half-effaced inscription is, of course, interesting as the last resting-place of the remains of the great discoverer of the New World, to whose memory Havana might surely raise some more fitting monument, wealthy as the city is.

Since the suppression of monastic institutions, some of the convents have been turned into hospitals; a conspicuous old church near the harbour is now used by the Custom authorities for storing goods in bond, and the monastery attached as writing-rooms for the clerks employed. In Havana, as in the old country, priestly dominion appears to have passsd away, though religious tolerance has made little or no progress, and

a Protestant is still heartily hated throughout Cuba.

The public gardens and squares of Havana are now as carefully tended as our own London parks, well stocked with flowers, dense shady trees, and royal palms, and embellished with fountains, the very sight and sound of which are delightfully refreshing in such a climate. At the bottom of the garden, in front of the Captain-General's palace, a tree is pointed out as the identical one under which Columbus received the Indian chiefs when he landed, an interesting, if true, memorial.

In the cool of the evening we sometimes drove out to the country-seat of the Captain-General, near the outskirts of the town, where the beautiful but badly cared for gardens are well worth a visit. The avenues of the stately royal palm, cocoas, mangoes, and other tropical fruits, are remarkably fine, and a labyrinth, with hedges of the red and crimson ibiscus, presents a mass of colour of wonderfully gorgeous effect. Our returning route led us through the long street which forms the suburb called the Cerro, lined with the marble-porticoed villas of the Cuban aristocracy. In style these

villas are all much alike, built close to the dusty road, with marble pillars supporting the roof, which projects over the wide verandah. A large entrance hall, strange to say, includes also the coach-house, reception-rooms, billiard-rooms, all on the same floor, the latter rooms facing the garden which stretches back from each villa. The floors are of marble or coloured tiles, as are also the walls, while the furniture consists of a few arm-chairs, rocking-chairs, and a table, all open to view through the unglazed windows, a cool and easy, if not a very luxurious, home.

Since the demolition of the fortifications which formerly surrounded Havana, many fine new streets have been built, while others are still in course of construction; these streets are wider, and the houses are built higher, than in the old portion of the town, nearer the harbour. The large open space which has been cleared in front of the Tacon Theatre, forms a very handsome place, with trees, fountains, statues, and flowers, and several remarkably fine cafés, hotels, clubs, and private houses, a few unfinished; but building has been

active of late, and the outside of most of the houses is now completed.

The market-place in the Campo de Marte is one of the sights of the town, and even though we had to be there at six a.m., the curious scene well repaid us for the effort. Fresh vegetables and fruit of every species produced in the tropics, bananas, sappadillos, alligator pears, fresh cocoas, pine-apples, and many unknown fruits, brilliantly-coloured fish, lobsters, and cray-fish of a beautiful variety, poultry, game, and butcher's meat, each in its special street of wooden stalls, were no less attractive or curious than were the crowds of Creoles, Chinese, and Negroes who were occupied filling their baskets, and bargaining for the various stores required for the day's consumption. The permanent market-place had lately been burnt, so a temporary one had been been erected in its place on this "Mars' Field," where we afterwards watched some volunteers learning their drill, an accomplishment they apparently stood much in need of.

Close to the Campo de Marte is the "Real Fabrica de Tabacos Hija de Cabañas y Carvajal,"

which we were kindly shown over by the proprietor, Signor Anselmo del Valle, to whom we had been presented by the British Consul-General. Several hundred Chinese as well as Negro slaves were employed in rolling the cigars, aud also a large number of Cuban free workmen. All hands, free and slave alike, overseers and workmen looked pale, emaciated, and unhealthy, showing that the strong odour and impalpable dust of the tobacco leaf, with which the air was impregnated, is destructive of human health. Ordering one of the workmen to roll me a cigar, Signor del Valle insisted on my smoking it at once, explaining that if kept only a few hours it would deteriorate, and require keeping some length of time before regaining its fragrance. This fresh cigar much resembled a well-kept one, fragrant without rankness, cool and mild.

We were told in Havana that of late years cigars have considerably fallen off in quality from what they used to be, owing to the large use of guano and other artificial manures in the tobacco-plantations. For many years no manure whatever was put upon the land, which gradually became

exhausted, upon which the planters took to using whatever manure produced the largest crops, regardless of the rankness caused thereby in the tobacco-plant. How that may be, I know not, but that the produce of the Vuelta Abajo is still of a rare excellence, I know, having purchased a case of the Cabañas brand from Signor del Valle of a quality rarely obtainable in the London market, and which, all expenses paid, cost me little more than half the price charged by our cigar-merchants. Large cigars of the best quality and Regalia size, average in Havana a hundred dollars gold (£25) a thousand; small ones about half that price, when of the best known brands, such as Cabañas, Partagas, &c. Others of no particular brand are manufactured in hundreds of small establishments, and can be bought about twenty-five per-cent cheaper.

Another large tobacco-manufactory which we visited was the Honradez, where three million cigarettes are daily turned out. Machinery is extensively used in every department, viz., for cutting and pressing the "picadura" or tobacco used in the cigarettes, for branding, for making

casks, for printing, and even for filling and turning the paper cigar, the latter machine being a French invention and very complicated. About a hundred Chinamen and the same number of free-hands are employed inside the place, and a thousand persons outside—the latter convicts—who gladly roll cigarettes for a small sum.

It was a marvel to watch the speed with which the Chinamen counted and packed the paper cases which enveloped each packet of cigarettes, seeming to know by the feel, without counting, the exact number; and so quick in the movement of their hands that the eye could scarcely follow them. It is for such work, however, that the Chinaman appears to be peculiarly adapted, his feeble frame making him unsuited for field or other hard labour.

During our stay in Havana, the weather was hot for the time of year, the range of the thermometer being from a minimum of 82° Fahrenheit at night, to a maximum of 90° in the shade during the daytime. We never, however, suffered from heat at the San Carlos, owing to the admirable contrivances for admitting the cool breezes and

excluding the sun. A wide, marble-paved passage, running along each side of an inner triangular court formed the *salle-à-manger*; off which opened the bed-rooms and reception-rooms, also marble-paved, with tiled and painted walls. The black and white marble which is so largely used in Cuba, both in the interior and exterior of most of the houses, is brought all the way from Genoa in Italy, six thousand miles distant.

Though plenty of marble exists in the island, it is not considered profitable to work the quarries, the cultivation of sugar, coffee, and tobacco fully employing all the slave-labour now procurable. In our bed-rooms, sacking stretched on an iron frame without mattress of any sort afforded a cool and sufficiently soft bed, where no vermin in any shape could hide. Outside our windows ran a broad balcony overlooking the harbour, where we daily enjoyed the fresh easterly trade-wind, which from sunrise to sunset blew across the bay, and cooled the heated atmosphere.

In the bay, the scene was ever interesting and ever-varying. Six Spanish men-of-war, two American war.ships, and an English iron-clad—the Belle-

rophon — were continually thundering out salutes, as the admirals commanding the fleets of the respective nations exchanged visits, or some new man-of-war arrived in the harbour, when the shore batteries added their share to the noise. Mail-steamers, merchantmen, and schooners from Europe, the United States, and the islands of the Caribbean Sea and Mexico, were constantly arriving; and a fleet of little sailing-boats, with white awnings spread, dotted the bay as they plied from ship to ship for hire, conveying goods and passengers to and fro, from ship to shore. Two ferry-boats, running across the bay to the suburb of Regla on the opposite side, conveyed every half-hour crowds of country or business people to their various occupations, affording an amusing study of country dress and physique.

During the twelve hours of daylight, the noise, bustle, and excitement were constant; but after gun-fire, as the sun dipped, darkness and silence overspread the bay, broken only by the whistle and bell of the steam-ferry, which continued to run up to midnight.

Not a breath of air rippled the water after sun-

set, but the stars shone reflected in its placid surface as brilliantly as in the firmament above. Then through the hot night-air would come the twang of the guitar, or sound of a fiddle from some of the cafés near, and voices of people talking below in the place, or the "ya-ya" laugh of a female slave flirting with her sable admirer on a neighbouring house-top in company with the cats. By midnight nearly unbroken silence reigned by sea and land, and those who call Havana unbearably noisy should compare it with a London west-end thoroughfare during the season.

As for the smells of the town, the drainage is undeniably bad, and in the hot months, when the south wind blows, the stench from the harbour is said to be horrible. But then I know no Spanish town which does not abound in abominable smells. An evil of Havana, at least as great as the bad drainage, is the filthy-tasting and unwholesome water with which the inhabitants are supplied. Even in coffee, iced drinks, cocktails or any other disguise, its nauseous taste is still perceptible, nor does boiling get rid of its horrible flavour. It has long been in contemplation to construct an aqueduct

to convey pure water from some distant springs to the town, and probably some day or other this will be accomplished, but meanwhile the inhabitants are being poisoned with stuff foul as sewage can make it, nor need one seek further for a cause why yellow fever finds a home in Havana.

Soon after our arrival we were made honorary members of a strangers' club on the Prado, a real treat to us who had not heard any news of the civilized world for months, except such scraps as passed through the Telegraph station at Punta Rassa. Knowing that a guerilla warfare had been carried on for five years in the island of Cuba, within two hundred miles of Havana, we were much surprised that nothing we saw in the capital was suggestive of any other state than one of profound peace throughout the land.

In the Cuban daily papers, a short account of an alleged defeat of the Insurgents sometimes appeared, or in the "New York Herald" an equally credible account of the progress of the Patriot army. Though nearly every Spaniard we saw wore a red and green cockade in his Panama hat, signifying

that he was a volunteer, complete uniform appeared to be worn only on duty, and we scarcely ever saw a regular soldier. We were told that deep hatred of the Spaniard animated every Creole breast, and that the massacres at the theatre, and at the Louvre Café, with the long oppression of the native by the ruling race, would some day be bloodily avenged; but of all this we saw no outward sign. Creole and Spaniard apparently lived together in perfect amity, though the manner of the Spaniard might be contemptuous, while that of the Creole was cringing.

Towards the end of March, however, news arrived from Puerto Principe, that the insurgents had routed a considerable body of Spanish cavalry, killing four hundred men and capturing five hundred horses. Then at all the cafés great excitement became apparent, the value of paper money fell fifty per cent, and for the first time we heard of troops moving to the front. The sound of bugles, early on the morning of the 24th March, called us on to the balcony, whence we watched two regiments of cavalry march into the place, form up and dismount. Alongside the wharf

lay two steam-transports with stores, forage, vegetables and munitions of war piled on deck, ready to convey these fresh troops to the scene of conflict as soon as they could be embarked.

On near inspection, the troop-horses appeared far too small for their riders, mostly big men, armed with breech-loading carbine, sword, and revolver. The troopers were well dressed in a striped blue and white linen suit, Panama hat, jacked gaiters reaching above the knee and strapped beneath the short boot, heavy Mexican spurs and brown leather belts. The embarkation was conducted without much confusion or noise, the men leading their horses in single file on board, where they secured them on the lower deck.

The ship was built on the American principle, with several tiers of decks, the horses being on the lower, which was flush with the wharf, while on the deck above, valises, saddles and arms were stowed. All being on board, in a very short time the transports steamed down the bay, accompanied by a small steam-tender with band on board playing patriotic airs; but little notice was taken of them

from the shore, only the feeblest of cheers being raised as they left the wharf. After the departure of these two regiments, we neither saw nor heard of any further military movements, and though the value of paper-money continued to fall, no disturbance of the public peace took place in Havana.

There is but little doubt that this guerilla war, which has for so many years distracted the island, might long since have been put an end to, had Spanish officials and Spanish generals but done their duty to their country. I was assured by those likely to know, that, by the prolongation of the war, civil and military officers both gained such pecuniary advantages, that their last wish was to crush the insurrection.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST STRONGHOLD OF SLAVERY—A SUGAR PLANTATION—MARIANAO—THE "INGENIO"—CHILDREN AND SLAVE-DRIVERS—INTENSE HEAT FROM FURNACES—FOREIGN MATTER IN SUGAR—THE NEGRO BARRACKS—BLOODHOUNDS—HORRID DENS—THE NURSERIES AND SICK WARDS—NUMBERS OF CHILDREN—PUNISHMENT CELLS—CHINESE QUARTERS—THE ENGLISH OVERSEER'S HOUSE—PRODUCE OF A PLANTATION—THE MORET LAW—DURATION OF NEGRO LIFE—A DAY'S LABOUR—CONDITION OF THE "CONTRACTED" CHINAMEN—THE LAW AND THE SLAVE-OWNER—ARRIVAL OF CHINESE COMMISSIONER—COOLIE TRAFFIC—THE ONLY REMEDY—SLAVERY IN THEORY AND SLAVERY IN REALITY—AN UNSOLVED PROBLEM.

TO see slavery in almost its last stronghold, and judge myself of the condition and treatment of the slaves on the Cuban plantations, had long been an object of my desires. In furtherance of this object, we

obtained in Havana the necessary permission to visit the sugar plantation of Tolosa, near the town of Marianao, distant about ten miles from the capital.

Half an hour in the cars, which throughout Cuba are constructed the same as in the United States, five stoppages at so many suburban hamlets, and we reached Marianao, a fashionable resort of the wealthy inhabitants of Havana, more especially on Sundays, when the hotels, cafés and villas are crowded with pleasure parties.

At Marianao we engaged carriages to convey us to the plantation, about two miles distant, over the usual abominable stony track which is made to do duty for a carriage road throughout Cuba. At the gate of the plantation we were stopped by an old negro armed with a musket, who examined our pass before allowing us to proceed. We then drove on through immense fields of cane on either hand, until we reached the "ingenio," or sugar manufactory, where we were received by the overseer and his wife, both English.

Outside the crushing-house some fifty or sixty

negro children, apparently from six to twelve years old, of both sexes, were occupied piling the canes on the elevator which conveyed them to the crushing wheel, fresh loads being constantly brought in ox-waggons from the fields. Toiling away for their very lives in the broiling sunshine, the poor little wretches kept a constant eye on a formidable cow-hide whip, wielded by a negro who stood by, ready to crack it across their bare backs if they attempted to idle or eat the sugar-cane.

Inside the building we were shown the whole process of sugar making, from the raw cane to the boxes of sugar ready packed for export.. The owner of the plantation was very proud of his machinery bought in England, in France, and in America. That used in crushing, boiling, refining, &c., was the best the world has yet produced, or human ingenuity invented, to supply the place of human labour.

At some of the machines negresses worked, at others Chinese and Africans. In some parts of the building the heat was so intense that negroes and Chinese, though stark naked with the except-

ion of a cloth round the loins, were pouring with sweat. As many stood in the vats in which the boiling sugar had cooled and hardened, breaking up the mass with picks and treading out the lumps with their bare feet, while the perspiration poured off them, the fact became evident that more foreign matter enters into the composition of sugar than is generally known. Certain quantities of pure lime are mixed with the cane juice to destroy the acid in all kinds of sugar, while in the manufacture of the coarser qualities molasses are largely used.

From the mill we proceeded to the negro barracks, as their quarters are termed, consisting of brick buildings one story high, enclosing a large square, entered through double iron gates. As we passed in, two ferocious-looking Cuban bloodhounds, chained one on either side of the gate, sniffed suspiciously near our legs, but, being trained to run down or attack negroes only, did not molest us.

On the ground-floor, opening on to the court-yard, were the negroes' rooms, secured by heavily barred and padlocked doors. Opening one of these we

found ourselves in one of the most horrible dens imaginable. Walls black with dirt, uneven clay floors about fourteen feet square, no means of admitting daylight or air except by the door, a wooden table, bench and bedstead the sole furniture. On the latter hung the remnants of a filthy blanket, while the worst filth covered the floor, furniture and walls, which also were alive with vermin. In each of these pestiferous dungeons, a whole family lived in a condition more foul and degraded than any beasts of the field. We looked into several and found them all alike, while from an open drain a few feet from the doors a most sickening stench proceeded.

Mounting a wooden staircase, at the foot of which was chained another bloodhound, we passed through a trap-door on to the upper floor, and found ourselves in a wide gallery running round the court. On this gallery opened large and tolerably well ventilated rooms, used as nurseries, sick-wards, lying-in rooms, saddler's rooms and stores. Dozens of naked children of every age, from the fly-devoured baby in its cradle to the black-eyed,

round-bellied urchin of three or four years old, swarmed along the gallery. Their number and various shades of colour, from jet black to nearly white, proved that the negro women were certainly not barren, and that the white man did not disdain to make a concubine as well as a slave of the African. A few old women too sick to work in the fields, or mothers not yet recovered from child-birth, looked after the children, who seemed happy enough, tumbling over each other, and playing with some bloodhound puppies, little thinking of their own unhappy lot, or the use to which these same puppies would shortly be put.

Outside the lying-in rooms some half-a-dozen young negresses were seated, evidently about to add to the population, engaged sewing cotton garments for themselves, not for the expected infants, covering of any sort being considered superfluous for coloured children of either sex on a Cuban plantation. In the punishment cells we saw only one culprit, a young negro with his feet in the stocks, the rest of the offenders being employed at this busy time of year working in chains in the fields. In the kitchen we found a filthy old negress

preparing a scanty meal for the slaves, of sweet potatoes, nothing else apparently being cooked for their dinners.

In quarters, the Chinese were considerably better off, occupying separate huts at some distance from the negro barracks, and living entirely by themselves. Nominally not subject to the lash, in reality they experience the same treatment as the African, and are compelled to work the same time, eighteen hours a day in the busy season—a fearful task in such a climate.

After a thorough inspection of everything connected with the sugar plantation, we retired to the house of the English overseer, situated in a grove of cocoa-nut palms, where our hot and weary frames were refreshed with cool drinks and the milk of fresh cocoa-nuts, large bunches of which were carefully fastened to a strong rope and lowered gently down from the tops of the tall palms by a young negro slave, who clambered up the smooth, straight trunks with the agility of a monkey.

From the overseer I learnt that the plantation consisted of about six hundred and fifty acres under

sugar-cane, employing six hundred slaves, black and Chinese. The annual produce averaged fifteen hundred tons of raw sugar, which at £16 per ton, the average value in Havana, would amount to £24,000 per annum, or nearly £37 per acre. No wonder then if Cuban planters are now cultivating sugar, and neglecting coffee and tobacco. No other crops will yield such magnificent returns, and while slavery lasts the Cuban sugar-planter will continue to earn an immense income by the labour of his black cattle, notwithstanding that the market value of a slave is as much as sixteen hundred dollars (£400).

By the Moret law, every child born in Cuba is free, and every negro becomes free on attaining the age of sixty. I asked how this law worked; the answer was, that the Moret law compels the children to work in return for their maintenance, up to their eighteenth year, so as yet it has made no difference, while the few negroes who live to the age of sixty are then unfit for work, and a good riddance to the planter. The average duration of life of an imported African is, I was

told, little more than five years if worked as a field-hand on a plantation.

On some of the Cuban plantations the slaves live less miserably than on others, but on all they are compelled to work to a cruel extent. Eighteen hours a day for six days out of seven, under a Cuban sun is horrible brutality, and soon wears out even the magnificently-powerful frame of the African, whose strength is kept constantly exerted to its very utmost efforts by the lash of the slave-driver. Sundays are kept on different days by different gangs, that is to say, one holiday is granted out of seven days to each gang in turn, a precaution taken least all the slaves should combine together to escape or murder their masters.

Though the fate of the poor African slave in Cuba is horrible, that of the unfortunate Asiatic, who is serving under contract, struck me as even more pitiable. The wan face, feeble frame, and dejected looks of the wretched Chinamen were absolutely painful to see. Having enjoyed the blessings of freedom up to the hour when his evil fate led him to quit his native country, the poor Chinaman

is ill-treated on board ship in a fearful manner, and on reaching Cuba is bought, sold, subjected to the lash, and compelled to work like the negro slaves. Against such treatment his natural intelligence and inborn sense of freedom rebel, and he either runs away and engages himself in some trade in the large towns, or goes about a miserable, heart-broken wretch.

I had a long conversation with a Spanish gentleman, an owner of slaves both black and yellow, on the subject of his Chinese servants. He told me they contracted to serve for seven years, receiving a certain stated allowance of food and money, and permitted to be sick every third month, but, if sick for more than four months out of the twelve, they would have to serve the extra time the sickness lasted before counting the seven years of service as completed. The law forbids their being subjected to the lash, or the sale of the contract against the will of the Chinaman contracted for, but in both respects the law is set at naught, and the Cuban buys and flogs his Chinese slave openly and with impunity.

I asked what became of the Chinaman when his

seven years' contract was ended. I was answered that the government then got hold of them, so that not even after seven or more years of slavery does the unfortunate Chinaman regain his liberty. My informant's account of their character was not a flattering one; he said they were liars, thieves, idle, and given to the most atrocious crimes. The value of the seven years' contract for a Chinese servant, he put at five hundred dollars gold (£125), and complained that one of his servants, for whom he had paid this sum, was first ill for three months out of six, and then ran away, nor could he induce a brother who was in his service to tell him what had become of the runaway, though he was convinced he knew well, and had tried *all the means in his power to make him.* Poor devil! I thought, as I observed the expression of the Spaniard's face.

While we were in Havana a commissioner arrived from the Chinese government to investigate the condition of the contracted coolies, complaints of whose cruel treatment had reached the Celestial Empire. I met the commissioner at an evening reception, a big, fat, pig-tailed Mandarin, ap-

parently without much energy, but accompanied by a sharp, well-educated secretary. That there was any course short of absolute prohibition of the export of coolies to the Spanish West Indies, and the forcible prevention of the traffic by the English fleet, likely to be of any benefit to poor John Chinaman, none, among those best able to judge, believed.

With a considerable experience of the free and independent negro in both Eastern and Western hemispheres, I had always thought that slavery was the only condition of life in which the idle, insolent, lying negro race was endurable; but then my experiences of slavery had been confined to the domestic form as seen in Egypt, Turkey, the far East and some of the semi-civilized parts of Africa, where there is no outward sign which offends the eye or shocks the senses.

What I saw of slavery on the Cuban plantations filled me with horror of the institution, and quite did away with my previous leaning towards it even in the milder form. It is all very well to say that the slave is sleek and fat, well cared for and

happier in that condition than when free; but those who say so, and I have often heard it said, should observe the cowed, dejected bearing of the slave, and the number of scarred, maimed, half-starved and prematurely worn-out negroes seen even in the streets of Havana, and then cross over the few miles of sea which intervene to Key West. There the negro appears the most light-hearted of the human race, chattering, laughing, singing and dancing break-downs the live long day, or sleeping idly in the shade; earning just sufficient to supply his daily wants when the last cent in his pocket is gone, a thieving, indolent, insolent, independent, pleasure-loving and happy being. That any stimulus short of the lash, even greed of gold, will make the negro work except by fits and starts, is quite contrary to all experience of the race.

How then the negro's place is to be filled when the inevitable day comes for the abolition of slavery, without ruining the fair island of Cuba, is a problem the solution of which now occupies the thoughts of both Spaniards and Creoles far more than the guerilla war. Having at their very doors the example of Jamaica and the Southern States

of America, we cannot wonder if every effort is made to stave off the evil hour, and leave to the next generation a task to which the present has shown itself as unequal as was the last.

CHAPTER XV.

START FOR MATANZAS—SCENES ALONG THE RAILWAY—PLANTERS' COUNTRY-HOUSES—THE LEON DE ORO—SITUATION OF THE TOWN—THE CUBAN "VOLANTE"—COUNTRY ROADS—A "CAFÉTAL" — CAVES OF BELLAMAR — STALACTITE CAVERNS — NATURE'S ALTAR—UNDERGROUND RIVER—FEARFUL HEAT—THE YUMURI VALLEY—THE ROYAL PALM—GORGEOUS TINTS—A CHAIN-GANG — CONTRASTS — THE THEATRE—THEATRICAL PRESIDENT—SCARCITY OF BRITISHERS—SPANISH TOLERATION—NEIGHBOURHOOD OF MATANZAS—A HOT JOURNEY—FAREWELL TO HAVANA—A NIGHT ON BOARD A STEAMER.

WISHING to visit Matanzas, a town ranking next to Havana in commercial importance, we took the steam-ferry across the bay at the early hour of five A.M. to Regla, whence we travelled by the cars of the direct Eastern railway to Matanzas,

distant about sixty miles. Passing the swampy head of the Bay of Havana covered with low mangrove trees, we crossed an undulating country bare and destitute of timber, but traversed by good wide roads in the immediate neighbourhood of the capital, and sprinkled with farm-houses.

As we advanced the scenery improved, the green mountain ridges on either hand delighting our eyes, so long wearied with the monotonous level of Florida. Rising abruptly to a height of some fourteen hundred feet, these ridges are clothed from base to summit with low green scrub, above which towers the grey stem and dark foliage of the royal palm, standing up clear against the sky line on the rocky ridge.

Sometimes we crossed valleys of great beauty through which wound streams whose banks were overhung by the graceful bamboo and flowering shrubs; sometimes we plunged in the tangled growth of natural forests, which still covers a great portion of the island. There the wild vine, stretching from tree to tree, the crimson and white convolvulus covering the shrubs with a brilliant mass of blossom, and many other creeping and climbing plants formed

a mass of low vegetable growth, rising to no height but impenetrable to man, unless a way were cut with knife and hatchet. We saw but few big trees, excepting palm, laurel and hoary old ceiba or cotton trees with gorgeously coloured foliage. In the wide, cultivated valleys the sugar-cane was being cut by gangs of slaves, and conveyed in ox-waggons to the "ingenio," the tall chimney of which smoked away in the middle of the plantation, announcing that sugar making was actively progressing.

The "hacienda," or planter's country-house, was generally somewhat nearer the line of railway, planted round with cocoa-nut palms, bananas and orange trees, and approached by a perfectly straight avenue bordered by double rows of the royal palm, planted within a few feet of one another on either hand. At the stations were large wooden store-houses piled up with sugar and molasses, the staple produce of the country, no tobacco, and but little coffee, being grown in that section.

Arrived at Matanzas we put up at the Leon de Oro, a very tolerable, if not very luxurious, hotel, where our appetites, sharpened by the early morning journey, did full justice to the excellent breakfast

provided. The situation of Matanzas is not unlike that of Havana but the background is far prettier. Standing at the head of a long bay, open to the north-east but completely sheltered from all other winds, the city is built on both sides of the San Juan river, extending round to the Yumuri river on the west. The hills which rise above the valleys of these two rivers are terraced with villas, and the bay is generally well filled with shipping, flying the flag of every maritime power. Substantial stone-houses, bordering the dusty streets, give an air of solidity to the town, and afford a refuge from the burning heat which we found far more oppressive than that at Havana.

In a couple of "volantes," we drove out to see the caves of Bellamar, situated about four miles east of the town. The "volante," the national carriage of Cuba, is a kind of gig-body with a head, between wheels sixteen feet in diameter and ten feet apart, with shafts eighteen feet in lengeh, drawn by two horses, one between the shafts, the other attached to the off-side shaft, a head behind the former. On the shaft horse is mounted a postilion, generally a negro, in jack-boots with enormous silver spurs

and gold-laced jacket. The leather springs and enormous wheels enable the volante alone to get along the infamous Cuban country-roads, without upsetting or jolting out the unfortunate occupant.

Passing some bathing machines on the sea-shore where the only bathers were a couple of pelicans, we turned off to the right, and were obliged to ascend the hill above the bay on foot, as it was too steep for the horses to pull both us and the vehicles up. From the top we jolted along a road where the left wheel was continually elevated several feet above the right for one moment, and the next was an equal depth below it. On either side were extensive fruit plantations, the hedges filled with wild pine-apple, cacti, Spanish bayonet, and flowers of all sorts.

Soon we arrived at the gate of a "cafetal" or coffee plantation, which we entered, and drove along through the coffee-plants, passing mangoes, paupaus, cocoa-nut palms, and orange-trees laden with fruit, till we reached the deserted "hacienda" of the "cafetal," near which is the entrance to the caves of Bellamar, only discovered a few years ago.

"The signors had better strip to their shirts, they will find it very hot below," said an old mulatto slave, who, with only a linen cloth round his loins, was lighting a bundle of candles preparatory to guiding us through the bowels of the earth. Taking a candle each, we descended about a hundred feet, by a roughly cut staircase, to a large chamber of which the roof was supported by a natural pillar of stalactite of the purest white, about twenty feet in diameter and a hundred in height, while the roof, walls and floor of the chamber were all of the same glittering white. From this first chamber, a narrow passage led by a steep descent to other chambers, sloping to a depth of three hundred feet below the surface of the ground.

For three miles we wandered through passages innumerable, opening out into chambers and halls of magnificent size, decorated by nature with ornaments of dazzling white or rose colour, more intricate in pattern than the finest lace work, more gorgeous than the arabesque-covered walls of the Alhambra of Granada.

Assuming all sorts of fantastic forms, the sta-

lactites sometimes appeared like a row of transparent rose-coloured statues, at others a snowy sea of ice sloping down from the lofty roof, or an altar with shining cross above it, erected by nature to the almighty workman whose hand alone could fashion such beautiful forms. Sometimes the passage was so low we had to bend nearly double, sometimes so lofty our torches could not penetrate the darkness above. In the lowest cavern we came on a swift, running stream of clear, cold water, which flowed through a tunnel for about thirty yards, then disappeared in a dark chasm. The exertion of walking so far, often in a terribly cramped position, made the perspiration run off us in streams notwithstanding our scanty attire, nor were we sorry once more to emerge into the light of day, and indulge in iced drinks until sufficiently cool to don our usual amount of clothes.

We made another very enjoyable expedition from Matanzas to the Yumuri valley, said to be one of the most beautiful in Cuba. A good road led us winding up the hill behind the town, past numerous villas to the summit of the ridge, where a solitary church stands in one of the most lovely situations

conceivable. Straight down, hundreds of feet beneath, the river Yumuri flows towards the sea through a wild gorge, which has rent the hills asunder in some convulsion of nature. To the north-east the eye wanders over the streets and buildings of the busy city, and the tranquil bay crowded with shipping to the distant ocean. On the south-west it lingers fondly on the fertile green basin called the Yumuri valley, green with an intensity and variety of colouring unknown in other lands.

Down the steep hill-side we descended into the valley through a dense growth of vegetation, far above which the royal palm reared its stately head; emerald green savannas met the hills alternately with patches cultivated with tobacco and cane. Farm-houses nestled under groves of cocoa and orange trees, and solitary ceibas added the brilliant colouring of their early Summer foliage to the general wealth of gorgeous tints. It was long after sunset, when we returned to the town, meeting on the hill a chained gang of convicts returning from working on the new road to the valley. They were chiefly Chinese and negroes, with a few white insurgents captured in the mountains, a fierce

looking crew strangely out of keeping with the romantic scenery and calm beauty of the tropical night.

Except the situation, there is but little to attract the stranger in the town of Matanzas, the chief points being the gardens in front of the governor's palace and a fine theatre, but little inferior in size to the Tacon at Havana, and much resembling it in internal arrangements. A peculiar feature of both theatres is the large box exactly opposite the stage, occupied in Europe by royalty or its representatives, but in Cuba by the theatrical president, whose duty it is to interfere should he find anything objectionable in the performance, either political or social.

We met many Americans in Matanzas, but no Englishmen; in fact, except officially employed, we met no Britishers in Cuba, but a vast number of Americans, most of them engaged in buying sugar or tobacco. No resentment appeared to be shown on account of the "Virginius" difficulty, or the many annoyances which it appears to be the policy of part of the Press and some politicians in the United States to inflict on the Spanish party in Cuba.

"If any Spanish correspondent in New York," said an American gentleman to me, "had dared to abuse the United States' government and people as the "Herald" correspondent has abused the government and people here, we should soon have made the place too hot for him." The Spaniards were however more tolerant, a virtue for which they have not usually been remarkable.

At Havana we had been cautioned not to venture beyond Matanzas on account of insurgents and brigands, but our Cuban host at the Leon de Oro assured us there were no insurgents or brigands within a hundred miles of Matanzas. Certainly, wherever we drove in our volantes the country looked peaceful and prosperous, the slaves hard at work cutting the cane on the sugar plantations, or tending the coffee-plants on the cafétals. Extremely lean cattle endeavoured to pick up a subsistence on the natural pastures, where the long brown grass nearly concealed them, but apparently afforded little nourishment. As in Florida, the dry Winter and Spring had throughout Cuba withered the grass and made water scarce, and the Summer rains were now anxiously expected. After seeing Matanzas

and the neighbouring country we returned to Havana, making the journey in the afternoon and being nearly stifled with the heat and dust, the thermometer in the railway carriage marking over a hundred degrees Fahrenheit in the shade.

A few more days in Havana, busily occupied visiting plantations by rail or road, and choosing cigars for shipment by Royal mail steamer to England, and we bade farewell to Cuba. Embarking in the New Orleans steam-ship "Clyde," we steamed out of harbour just before sunset, towing to the entrance of the bay a boat-load of Spanish police on either side, to see that no Cuban or negro was smuggled on board, as had been done a short time previously on one of the New York steam-ships. Then, with a strong easterly trade-wind on our quarter, the brilliant yellow and green painted houses of Havana, and rock-hewn bathing establishment on the Point, quickly lessened to little specs, and soon the Cuban hills themselves became an indistinct line on the horizon, and finally disappeared in the increasing darkness.

We passed a night of terrible heat in a filthy and

crowded cabin, the floor covered with Creole men and women smoking cigars or cigarettes between each spasm of sea-sickness. The steamer was one of the most filthy, rotten, and unseaworthy ships it has ever been my lot to travel in, and we gladly turned out at five next morning, to find ourselves moored alongside the wharf at Key West, and in a short time after in quarters at the St. James's Hotel.

CHAPTER XVI.

RETURN TO KEY WEST—DIFFICULTY OF FINDING CONVEYANCE —PERSEVERANCE REWARDED — STORES — VICTUALLING THE SHIP—START FOR THE INDIAN RIVER—THE "IDA MACKAY"— OUR CAPTAIN, MATE, COOK AND CREW—THE FLORIDA REEF— —BECALMED — A CORAL REEF — SPEARING FISH — ANCHOR NEAR CAYO SAMBE—THE LIFE AND DEATH OF "OLD MAN JOE" — LOS MARTIRES — ANIMAL LIFE — SPONGING — MANGROVE ISLETS—EFFECT OF THE MOON—SCORPIONS—TURTLE SPEARING—A MONSTER—TENACITY OF LIFE—TURTLE FLESH —INDIAN KEY — A HUMANE WRECKER — CAYO LARGO — SETTLEMENT AT RODRIGUEZ BAY—PINE APPLE PLANTATIONS —CONDITION OF SETTLERS—PRODUCTIONS—CLIMATE—CORDIAL FAREWELL—ANGHOR AT CAPE FLORIDA.

IMMEDIATELY after our return to Key West, we commenced inquiries as to the possibility of hiring a schooner to convey us round to Biscayne Bay and the Indian River on the East coast of Florida.

Though the harbour was full of schooners and cutters of all sizes, the owners flatly refused to take us for any consideration; some honestly confessing that they were afraid to attempt a sail along such a dreaded coast, others stating that they were just about to start for the sponging grounds in the Gulf of Mexico, and could not therefore make any arrangement for a voyage of such uncertain duration. Apparently no travellers had previously attempted to make the voyage, as we encountered all those difficulties which invariably crop up when attempting any unbeaten track.

At last perseverance succeeded, and an agreement was concluded with the captain and part owner of the schooner "Ida MacKay," by name De Merritt, who, for the sum of eighteen dollars a day, engaged to convey us wherever we wished to go, providing that the voyage should not be of less than six days duration, and that we should victual the ship for crew of four, besides ourselves. In fulfilment of these terms, we purchased at a store sufficient salt beef, bacon, coffee, flour, &c., to victual the ship for twelve days, the bill amounting to about fifty dollars. In twenty-four hours all was prepared and

stowed on board, including the guns, tents, and baggage which had been stored at the consulate during our absence in Cuba, and early in the morning of April 1st, M——, Dr. Hicks, and I proceeded on board, the anchor was hove, and with a light breeze from the east we glided through the fleet and rounded the old brick fort which guards the entrance to the harbour.

The "Ida MacKay" schooner of about forty tons, English measurement, was a curious-shaped craft. Nearly flat-bottomed, she only drew three feet of water, but had a sliding keel sixteen feet in depth; her length was fifty feet with twenty feet beam. She was stiff enough to stand up to any breeze and proved herself rather a fast sailor, carrying a large amount of canvas.

Our skipper was a professional wrecker, carrying a license to wreck round the coasts of Florida and the Keys. Born of parents who had migrated from the Bahamas, he was what is called in Key West a "conch," and carried with him a mate also a "conch," but a British subject, having himself migrated from Nassau and never renounced his allegiance. During the war between the North and

South, this mate had commanded a schooner which was engaged blockade-running between the Bahamas and the various inlets on the East coast of Florida, and we now depended on him to pilot us to the Indian River inlet, as our captain had never been there. Next in rank of our crew, came the cook, a half-bred Spaniard, who had once been at Biscayne Bay, which neither the mate nor skipper had ever entered, so he was considered pilot for that port. Lastly, our only able-bodied seaman was a fine full-blooded negro named "Bob," a British subject from one of the Bahamas. Though of immensely strong frame, Bob was extremely lazy and was consequently in everlasting hot water with both captain and mate, as their object was to make him do all the work of the ship, while his was to do nothing but sleep. During the voyage we had considerable difficulty in preventing our skipper from braining Bob, as we were roused by his cries one morning to find the negro at the extreme end of the bowsprit, and the captain beating him on the head with a capstan bar. After this, the threat was daily held over him that on the return voyage he

would be taken to Cuba and sold for a slave to the Spaniards.

Meeting light head-winds all our first day we made slow progress, and when at four P.M. it fell a dead calm, we had only made fifteen miles. Our course which was nearly east, lay between the keys and the Florida coral reef, which extends from the western-most keys to Cape Florida, at a distance of from two to four miles from the keys. In two places only does the reef appear above high-water mark, the rest of it having a depth of from two to ten feet of water over it. Inside this dreaded reef the channel is so intricate and dangerous that it is impossible to sail at night, the colour of the water alone guiding the mariner in the day-time. Immediately outside the reef the depth of water suddenly increases to over eight hundred fathoms, and the Gulf-stream rushes along to the north-east at the rate of five or six knots an hour. All along the reef are buoys and beacons, with light-houses here and there. On some of the keys a notice is stuck up in a conspicuous position, intimating where the nearest fresh water is to be found for the benefit of shipwrecked crews.

Finding ourselves close to the reef when becalmed, we lowered a boat, and stowing on board the grains, or double-headed harpoon, we pulled off to the reef to spear fish. A flock of several hundred pelicans, busily employed fishing for their suppers sailed majestically away as we approached, and the water rapidly shoaling to about two feet, we were soon looking down intently through the crystal-clear sea, on that most beautiful wonder of the deep, a coral reef. Among the innumerable cavities in the coral rock darted fish of every size and colour, from sharks to little gold fish no bigger than minnows. Sea-weeds of many brilliant colours and rare species, the sea-fan, pavonia or peacock's tail, and other beautiful forms of corallum, festooned the cavities, while sponges, sea-eggs with their long black spikes, conches, zoophytes and shells of every variety nearly concealed the coral rock from view.

One of the two spots where the reef appears above the water, we found covered with shells and guano, rising in a mound only a few yards in diameter. As we paddled slowly above the reef, our mate stood in the bows and darted the grains into the hollows

of the rock with such effect that, in half an hour, we had secured in the boat six purple cray-fish, four conches, one jack-fish, weighing thirty pounds, and several angel-fish. Then, a light breeze beginning to ruffle the water, we hastened on board the schooner, which bore up to meet us, and at sunset dropped anchor near the little island of Cayo Sambe, one of the Pine Island group, situated some five-and-twenty miles east of Key West.

As we smoked our cigars after supper, our skipper told us the following tale concerning the mangrove-clad islet near which we lay. For thirty years, he said, a solitary human being, known only by the name of "old man Joe," had lived in a palmetto hut on the islet, supporting himself by cultivating vegetables and cutting button-wood, which he every week brought in a little sail-boat to Key West, and there exchanged for such supplies as he needed. Who he was, or whence he came, was unknown, nor was any clue ever sought for as to his identity. About two months ago the old man did not make his usual weekly appearance; so our skipper, who had dealt with him for years, when

the second week expired without his appearing, set off in his schooner to see what had become of the old man.

On the beach he found old Joe's boat, the sail half hoisted, the boat stored with such vegetables as he was wont to bring to market, while in the bottom lay the old man, dead. Apparently he had died in a fit when in the act of hoisting sail, so they rolled the body up in the boat's sail and buried him on the beach of his lonely isle. A stunted cabbage-palm, which he had planted, marks the spot where "old man Joe" lies, the solitary and last inhabitant of Cayo Sambe.

The following morning the easterly trade-wind rose strong with the sun, but being ahead we could only advance by tacks innumerable between the reef, on which the breakers dashed glittering sheets of foam, and the desolate isles called by the Spaniards "Los Martires" or the Martyrs, from the number of men who have perished on them. A vast quantity and variety of animal life had sought the calm waters within the reef, turtles, porpoises, sharks, sea-birds of various sorts, pelicans, ospreys, and thousands of the beautiful rainbow-hued paper-

nautili or argonaut, swimming with their long arms extended in a straight line, their ugly bodies appearing hardly connected with the fragile shell. Nor did animal life alone engage our attention, as we fell in with a fleet of sponging schooners whose movements we followed with interest. Each schooner was towing a long tail of ten or twelve boats, in which the "spongers," when arrived in likely spots, row about examining the ground.

In order to see the bottom when the surface of the water is ruffled by a breeze, a bucket is used with a glass bottom, which being immersed about six inches in the water, enables the sponger to peer down to the bottom through water varying in depth from three fathoms to three feet. When the sponges are spied out, a wooden pole with a hooked knife at the end is used to detach them from the bottom, the shallow water rendering divers unnecessary. The quality of the sponges obtained in these waters and in the Gulf of Mexico is inferior, the value of the best sheep's wool sponges at Key West being one dollar a pound, that of the still coarser sorts from thirty to fifty cents.

All the keys we passed that day were uninhabited

mangrove covering nearly all, though here and there we noticed a few cocoa-palms rising above the scrub, planted by some unknown solitary like "old man Joe," as the cocoa-nut palm is not indigenous on any of these islands. Our second night we anchored near the light-house on Sombrero bank, opposite the key called Bahia Honda.

Notwithstanding that a bright moon shone all night, which in these regions is considered more fatal to sleep in than the mid-day sun, withering the face exposed to its rays, I slept on an air mattress on deck every night, with water-proof to keep off the dew, and mosquito net to protect me from these insects. In the low cabin below the heat was unbearable, to say nothing of fleas, mosquitoes, cockroaches, and scorpions, which latter plagues had been brought on board in old logs of fire-wood, and had an unpleasant way of concealing themselves in the blankets and bedding below.

Our cook, who lay down carelessly one night before examining his blankets, got severely bitten in the hand and suffered much inconvenience from the wound, though no fatal consequences ensued.

Our third day out we got a slightly more favour-

able wind, and bowled along until we met such immense quantities of turtle of various species, green, hawk's-bill, and logger-head, floating on the surface of the water, or a few feet below, that the schooner was hove to and a boat launched for the purpose of spearing some of them. Pulling quietly up to an enormous logger-head turtle, which we saw floating about four feet below the surface, our mate stood in the bows of the boat with a single-pronged harpoon in his hand, which, when within a few feet of the victim, he lowered and launched through the water with such tremendous force that it pierced the back-shell, the entire iron head disappearing in the body, and the turtle instantly sinking to the bottom when thus wounded. The line attached to the harpoon, which had been kept carefully coiled, was then allowed to run out, till the bottom was reached, when the line was hauled taut, and a sharp look-out kept for the moment when the turtle would be compelled to rise to the surface to breathe. This he did in about twenty minutes, when a second harpoon was fixed in his body, and then the battle began.

The turtle rushed backwards and forwards at the

bottom of the sea, rising sometimes here, sometimes there, and wherever he rose it was necessary to have the bows of the boat towards him, or his great weight, suddenly jerking the line sideways, would have upset us. At last his struggles became fainter, and in about an hour from striking we hauled him alongside, and lashing a flapper to the gunwale we towed the turtle to the schooner. There, by means of a pulley and chain passed round his flappers, he was hauled on board, biting savagely at everything near, with jaws large and powerful enough to scrunch the side of a small boat. We found that the monster weighed close on six hundred pounds, and his flesh made pretty fair soup, though too rank to eat.

Afterwards we killed two hawksbill turtles, from the shell of which species tortoise-shell is manufactured; its flesh we found eatable, though not nearly so good as that of a small green turtle we captured a day or two later. After our first day's turtle-spearing, we had turtle-soup, turtle-steak, and turtle in every form for the rest of the voyage, while the rigging was hung with flesh drying in the sun, till we quite loathed the sight, smell, and

taste of turtle flesh. We did not however so quickly tire of the sport of spearing the turtles, which was most exciting amusement. The harpoon, when wielded by the mate standing up in the boat's bows, every limb trembling with excitement until the timbers shook, and hurled with extraordinary strength exactly at the right moment, never failed to pierce and secure a victim; a success which did not always fall, I may say rarely fell to our own unskilled efforts.

The tenacity of life exhibited by the turtles we cut up on board was both horrible and grotesque, the severed head snapping at everything near it for hours, and the tail endeavouring to twist itself round the fingers of the operator who was cutting the last slice of meat off the dissected body. Our skipper gravely informed us that not even cooking would kill a turtle before moon-rise on the day following its capture.

The third night we anchored opposite the lighthouse which is built on Alligator Key, in the harbour of an islet called Indian Key, formerly doing a smart business in wrecking and now inhabited by half a dozen families who have been com-

pelled to take to sponging for support, since the erection of the light-houses and beacons on the reef.

"I wish them d——d lights was sunk below the sea," growled our humane skipper, as he related to us tales of the many ships he had wrecked, and valuable cargoes he had obtained salvage on a few years ago, before the flashing light near us was there to send its merciful warning to the passing vessel. I should think Indian Key is the smallest inhabited island in the world; it is not more than a hundred and fifty yards in diameter, and contains exactly five houses, six palm-trees and one dozen plants of the sisal hemp. Its inhabitants are said to be little better than pirates, and are spoken of as lawless characters by those who scarcely consider murder a crime.

From Indian Key we got a fresh breeze from the east-south-east, which drove us merrily on our course to Cayo Largo, the largest, as its name implies, of this southern group of islands, being about eighteen miles long by from half a mile to two miles in width. In a shallow bay, behind a mangrove islet called Rodriguez Key, we dropped anchor

opposite a settlement of three or four wooden houses, whose inhabitants quickly pulled off to us in a great state of excitement to know what wreck we were after, or what luck we had already had.

Being with difficulty persuaded that we were travelling for pleasure, and had come to Cayo Largo to visit the pine-apple plantations, great disappointment became evident in the men's countenances, though they hospitably invited us to visit their houses and plantations, and promised us fruit and vegetables in abundance.

We found the island to be composed of coral rock, in many places bare, but here and there covered with a few inches of dark red soil. In the cleared patches, which vary in size from one to five acres, the settlers raise, among the charred stumps of trees and fragments of rock, pine-apples, bananas, sappadillos, mangoes, alligator pears, guavas, oranges, limes, sugar-cane, tomatoes, peppers and melons. Of these, pine-apples appeared to do best, many acres being covered with the plant which seemed to flourish in the glowing heat of the rocky soil.

Bananas, a settler told me, were profitable, one species yielding fruit at six months old, the other at eighteen months. The great difficulty is to find a market for their produce, which has to run the risk of conveyance to Charleston, New Orleans or New York, many hundreds of miles distant across dangerous seas. One old man told me he had tried the previous season to sell a cargo of pines, which he carried in his own schooner direct to Charleston, but the cholera broke out and no one would buy them, so he was nearly ruined by the venture. Oranges appeared to do worse on the island and looked withered by the long drought, for the orange tree needs rain or irrigation in a dry spell. Unfortunately on Cayo Largo there is no fresh water, tanks which hold the water collected in the rainy season alone supplying the inhabitants, and being too scanty to afford irrigation to the land.

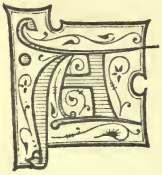
Except these cultivated patches, the rest of the key is covered with a dense natural growth of small timber, among which the mangrove, log-wood and madeira—a species of mahogany—are the most valuable. Mosquitoes and flies, snakes and scorpions abound, and hurricanes are frequent in the Autumn,

but they said the island was healthy and sickness very rare. The heat we found almost insupportable, though pretty well seasoned, nor could we breathe without gasping until again on board the "Ida MacKay." There are about seven families settled on the island, all very poor and now engaged in cultivating the fruits before mentioned, but much regretting the falling off in the profitable bnsiness of wrecking.

Baskets of fruit and fresh vegetables were presented to us on leaving, nor would they accept a cent of the money we pressed on them. Strangers, they said, even of their own nation, they rarely had the pleasure of seeing in their lonely island, but Britishers had never before done them the honour of a visit. So shaking hands with the whole population of the island, we bade farewell to Rodriguez bay, and sailed out again past the little mangrove islet, and on past the light-house on Carysford reef, and whole archipelagos of mangrove islets, till the sun set and the anchor was dropped close to the light-house on the south point of the island, called Key Biscayne, which point is named Cape Florida.

CHAPTER XVII.

KEY BISCAYNE LIGHT-HOUSE—BISCAYNE BAY—SETTLEMENT OF MIAMI—FORT DALLAS ESTATE—THE DOCTOR'S INVESTMENT—HORSE AND HORNET FLIES—ARRIVAL OF INDIANS IN CANOES—FIRE-WATER—HOMES OF THE SEMINOLES IN THE EVERGLADES—THE INDIAN HUNTING-GROUNDS—TIGER TAIL—THE SQUAWS—INDIAN CASTANETS—NATIVE WORK—THE RIVER MIAMI—FALLS OF THE MIAMI—ASCENT TO THE EVERGLADES—DESCRIPTION OF THE EVERGLADES—THE FOUR CRESCENTS—INDIAN ARROW-ROOT PLANT—LEAVE MIAMI—CROSSING THE BAR—BEACH-COMBERS—THE BAHAMA BANKS—A WRECK IN SIGHT—INDIAN RIVER INLET—DANGEROUS ENTRANCE—TOUCH AND GO—FIRST HEAVY STORM—COMMENCEMENT OF RAINS.



AT daylight on the fifth day out from Key West, we rounded Key Biscayne light-house, with a grove of cocoa-nut palms behind; then passing a very good house, the residence of the light-house keeper,

with patch of garden and cultivated ground, we entered Biscayne Bay. Under the pilotage of our cook we felt our way across, tacking about among the numerous shoals and bars which obstruct these shallow waters.

The bay is about twenty-five miles long, with an average breadth of six miles, and has narrow and shallow entrances between the keys which separate it from the ocean. Immediately opposite the bows of our schooner, after rounding Cape Florida, appeared a couple of wooden shanties on a bluff of the mainland; and a few miles further up the coast to the north-east, but on lower ground and not visible to us approaching from the south until quite close, a grove of cocoa-nut palms came into view marking the entrance to the Miami river, the mouth of which is concealed by the nature of the ground.

Sailing up to a hundred yards from the cocoa-nut grove we dropped anchor in ten feet of water, and pulling in the gig some few hnndred yards up the Miami river, landed at a rough landing place on the left bank, where we saw a negro lying asleep. It was some time before we could arouse

the darky, but at last we got him on his legs, when he announced himself as cook on the Fort Dallas estate, and though sick, he went at our bidding to inform the manager of the estate of our arrival.

Throughout Florida the settlement of Miami, on Biscayne Bay, is represented as a sort of terrestial paradise, cultivated like the garden of Eden, where every fruit of the tropics grows luxuriantly, where magnificent scenery delights the eye, and fever and death are unknown. It is in reality a very small settlement on a ridge of limestone, rising from five to thirty feet above the sea, with a loose sandy loam over it, only a few inches in depth, but tolerably fertile. The climate is equable but very hot, the scenery is pretty but never approaches magnificence, while the multitude of insects makes life hardly endurable.

At Miami there are four houses, two on either bank of the river. On the right bank overlooking the bay, stands the house of an English settler, Mr. Brettle, well situated on a bluff with gardens and terraces, carefully kept and planted, making it about the prettiest residence in South Florida, and

the only one with any claim to taste in the laying out of the grounds. At the time of our visit the owner was absent, and the place, we were informed, was for sale. Near it is a store kept supplied with necessaries from Key West, which does a considerable trade with the Indians who resort thither for whiskey and beads.

On the left bank of the Miami river lives the gentleman in charge of what is called the Fort Dallas estate, owned by a company of which our fellow-traveller the Doctor was one. The estate consists of six hundred and fifty acres of land, about twenty of which have been cleared and planted with cocoas, guavas, orange and other fruit trees, but now form a wilderness hardly distinguishable from the forest. There are some stone remains of the old Fort Dallas, occupied by soldiers during the Indian war, and a row of stone-houses or out-buildings now falling into ruins.

The estate formerly belonged to a gentleman who had employed some two hundred slaves in raising sugar, cotton and fruit, but even before the war he was compelled to abandon the business as it

did not pay, though a large amount of capital had been laid out. Traces of this remain in the ruined houses, the grove of cocoa-palms which he planted along the left bank of the Miami river, and the wilderness of fruit trees fast becoming jungle.

Our Doctor, who for the first time beheld his property, did not appear much impressed with the value of his investment, and had to stand a deal of chaff from us on account of the difference between the glowing account he had received and related to us concerning the settlement, and the reality now known by personal observation.

A great objection to settling at Miami is its isolation, the only communication it possesses with the outside world being by a little mail-cutter which sails twice a month to and from Key West; but a greater objection still, in my opinion, are the winged insects, two species in addition to those we met in the rest of Florida attacking us the moment we landed. One of these was what the natives called a horse-fly, about the size of a very large blue-bottle, and with the buzz of a dozen of them; its body was

of a brown colour striped with yellow, resembling that of the African tsetse, and it inflicted a sharp sting. The other fly was considerably larger, resembling the striped hornet-fly; one settled on my leg before I had been on shore five minutes, and gave me a bite through my gaiters that made me jump, and sent the blood running into my boot.

A great deal is said by Florida land-agents about Biscayne being made the terminus of a rail way to be constructed from Jacksonville, *viâ* the town of Enterprise and St. John river to Miami, and from thence to reach along from key to key on tressel work as far as Key West, so as to convey the trade of the West Indies and South America through Florida to the North. Beyond the fact that the track is marked in the maps of Florida published at Jacksonville, there is no reason to suppose that such a line is ever likely to be built as long as Florida remains in her present bankrupt and impoverished condition.

The day before our arrival at Miami, two canoes arrived at the store I have mentioned, containing two squaws and an Indian in each, belonging to the

remnant of the Seminoles who inhabit some of the timbered lands, or "islands," which rise above the Everglades, and raise there corn, potatoes, and other vegetables, with which, and with skins, they trade for their favourite "fire-water." These Indians had lost no time in getting under the influence of the whiskey, and were dead-drunk a few hours after their arrival.

It is supposed that there are not more than a hundred and fifty Indians now remaining in Florida, a peaceful and harmless set, but untamed as ever, avoiding the white man, and supporting themselves principally by the chase. They have some negroes living with them on their "islands," and cultivating the ground, not, I was assured by a hunter who had visited them, in a condition of slavery, as is generally supposed in Northern Florida, but perfectly free to go or remain as they please, and treated as equals by the red men.

One portion of these Seminole Indians hunt the country to the north-west of the Everglades, up to the Caloosahatchee and Myakka rivers; the other portion the country south and east of the Everglades, from Miami to Cape Sable, called the Indian hunting-grounds. These consist of rolling prairie-

land, backed by a ridge of pine and mangrove, extending between the sea and the Everglades, and rising from three to ten feet above both sea and swamp. The game on these hunting-grounds consists of deer and turkeys in tolerable abundance, but so much hunted by the Indians, as there is no game in the Everglades, that they are difficult to get near to. There are two chiefs of these Seminoles rejoicing in the name of "Tiger Tail," the elder chief who is the father of Tiger Tail junior, being nearly a hundred years of age. We heard a report that he had been killed by his squaws as useless, but the Indians at Miami either could not or would not say whether the report was true or false.

The Indians complain that their lodges on the islands in the Everglades are so unhealthy that they cannot rear their children, and there is no doubt that they are decreasing fast, and will probably be extinct even before the game on which they subsist. Should they attempt to migrate from their present locality, the settlers every where expressed their determination to drive them back with the rifle.

The Red Skins down at Miami were tall, well-grown men, with the usual straight black hair and strongly marked features; their squaws were a hideous bundle of rags decorated with glass beads and a few old coins. The only curious article of native work we saw was a species of musical instrument, which might be called a pair of Indian castanets. These were made of six small land-tortoise shells, sewn on to pieces of embroidered deer's hide, which was cut so as to fit on to the thighs of a squaw. The shells were filled with the beans of the wild coffee-plant, which, rattling about as the woman danced, produced sounds not unlike that of the Spanish castanets. They were curious specimens of native work and difficult to procure, as the Indians usually refuse to sell them.

At its mouth the river Miami is about eighty yards in width, with a depth of eight or nine feet. It has a rocky bed, and shores fringed with mangrove. Ascending the river in the schooner's gig, we found that the tidal water reached about three miles from the bay, the slope of the river's bed being greater than in most of the Florida rivers. Winding

along between mangrove-clad banks, the haunt of herons, bitterns and alligators, the river has an average depth of four feet for a distance of seven miles further up, when the navigation is barred by what are called the falls of the Miami, some five or six feet high, the highest in South Florida, where the river breaks through the rocky brim of the Everglades, about eight miles above Fort Dallas.

A glance at the map will show that what are called the Everglades, or Great Glades, extend from Lake Okeechobee on the north, to the limestone ridge I have spoken of as the Indian hunting-ground. A little north of the out-flow of the Miami, the ridge dividing this swampy basin from the Atlantic is only five miles in width, but the slope is south-westerly, so that the Everglades drain into the Gulf of Mexico through the great swamp, known as the Thousand Islands, lying between Cape Sable and Cape Romano. The area of the Everglades is four thousand square miles, presenting to the eye the appearance of a vast plain of coarse saw-grass, above which, here and there, rise keys or islands well wooded and fertile. In most

parts the water forms narrow channels through the swamp; occasionally, as when the out-flow of the Miami occurs, it spreads out into large sheets of water like lakes, with limestone bottom and timbered islands.

The four distinct crescents formed by the islands of the Everglades, the ridge which bounds them on the south and east, the Florida Keys, and the outside reef, are all composed of the same coral rock, and are supposed to owe their existence to the same agency—these crescents, according to geologists, having been formed in succession, by the coral insects, first the innermost, and then the other reefs, further and further out in the sea, the rapid current of the Gulf-stream sweeping round to the north-east imparting to each reef its crescent shape.

In the neighbourhood of the Miami, the Indian arrowroot grows abundantly, and a mill for manufacturing koontee, as the arrowroot plant is called, formerly did a considerable business, but is now abandoned. As the season for hunting deer was over, we soon had enough of Miami, and on the evening of the second day once more weighed anchor and turned the schooner's head seaward, taking with

us a good supply of fresh cocoa-nuts from the grove at the river's mouth, the milk of which our mate pronounced a cure for dysentery from which he was suffering.

Unwilling to beat up to the light-house on Cape Florida against a head wind, we determined to try the narrow pass between Key Biscayne and Virgin Island, known as Bear Cut, so steered boldly for the line of white breakers which thundered on the bar outside. Rapidly sweeping by the white sandy beach, which extending from both islands left us a passage only a few yards in width, we made for what seemed the deepest part of the line of white foam. After a few anxious minutes, actually touching the bottom once, we crossed the bar safely and stood on our course for the light-house on Jupiter Inlet, with a ten knot breeze from the south-east.

At Miami we had ascertained that the entrance to the lagoon called St. Lucie Bay, by Jupiter Inlet, had been closed some time previously by sand, leaving only six inches of water at high tide, so we directed our mate, who had now become pilot in succession to the cook, the latter having resigned

after crossing the bar outside Biscayne Bay, to make the best course he could for the Indian River Inlet, well known to him in his blockade-running days.

Keeping a few miles from shore, we noticed after dark a camp-fire on the beach, which our skipper informed us proceeded from a party of what he called "beach-combers," that is, ruffians who infest the coast in the hope of plundering shipwrecked crews, or ships which they endeavour to lure on shore by means of false lights. So rapidly did the wind and Gulf-stream send us along that, in nine hours after leaving Biscayne Bay, the light-house on Jupiter Inlet appeared on our port-bow, distant about seven miles. Then the wind suddenly dropping to a dead calm, the Gulf-stream caught us and swept us helplessly across to the Bahama banks, between sixty and seventy miles distant, sun-rise finding us only a few miles off Settlement Point, the north-west end of Great Bahama Island.

With the sun an easterly breeze sprang up, and by the afternoon we had again sighted the Florida coast near Gilbert's Bar, where the wreck of a steamship visible on the rocks threw our skipper and

mate into a great state of excitement, in anticipation of a profitable wrecking. On approaching close, however, it became apparent to our skipper's experienced eye that other wreckers had already been at work, so knowing that nothing of the slightest value would by any chance remain, the schooner's head was again turned north, with hearty curses on the unknown discoverers of the wrecked steamer.

Keeping an anxious look-out from the mast-head as we sailed along the low-land, wooded with cabbage-palm and mangrove, about an hour before sunset the mate sang out from aloft that he could see the breakers on the bar off the Indian River Inlet. As we approached, we perceived on the beach the skeleton frames of three wrecked vessels, a far from pleasant sight to us, who knew we were about to attempt a passage in which it was even betting whether we succeeded, or were broken to pieces among the heavy breakers which thundered on the bar a few ship's-lengths ahead.

With our hearts in our mouths we dashed through the foaming waves, which swept our deck and hurried us headlong towards the narrow

inlet through which a six knot tide was rushing. "Six feet!" called out our skipper, as he heaved the lead; "four feet;" "three and a half," a heavy bump, and then a huge wave lifting us, we were over the bar and tearing madly across to the opposite bank of the river, which makes a sudden turn to the left at an acute angle to the inlet.

Grazing the trees with her bowsprit, the "Ida MacKay" swung round obedient to her helm, and again we breathed freely, while the skipper cursed the mate, and swore he hoped he might be d——d if he ever would have ventured in, if he had known the risk, and appealed to all the powers above to inform him how he was ever to get out again. Dropping about a mile down the Fort Pierce channel, we anchored just before dark among the mangrove islets on the east bank of the St. Lucie Sound, as this part of the Indian river lagoon is called, about half way between Fort Pierce and Fort Capron which stand on the Western bank.

Hardly had we dropped anchor, when such a violent storm of lightning, thunder and rain burst

over us, as would have effectually prevented us entering the inlet, and probably driven us ashore had we encountered it outside. Our voyage was ended just in time, the 7th April was the last day of fine weather, as it was the first of bad, we had experienced in Florida. Henceforth it appeared that the rainy season had set in, or at any rate commenced, as during the rest of our stay in the country we had daily and nightly storms of terrific violence, the water pouring down in cataracts, and the thunder and lightning crashing and flashing as it is wont to do during the tropical rains.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NIGHT AMONG THE MANGROVES—A FOREST OF OYSTER TREES—COON OYSTERS—OYSTER BANKS—REVENUE OFFICERS AND THE BLOCKADE-RUNNERS—LAND AT ST. LUCIE—PROFESSOR "FRED. BEVERLEY"—HIS EXPEDITION TO LAKE OKEECHOBEE—PRACTICAL ROUTES TO THAT LAKE—THE ALPATTIE FLATS—PRAIRIES—THE KISSIMMEE RIVER—BIRDS AND FISH—RIVER SHORES—ENTER LAKE OKEECHOBEE—TOUR OF ITS SHORES—ONLY ONE ISLAND—DIFFERENT VEGETATION—TERMINATION OF THE LAKE IN THE EVERGLADES — NORTH BOUNDARY OF EVERGLADES — MOCASSIN SNAKES — NO FISH—RUINS OF INDIAN VILLAGES — HARDSHIPS AND FEVERS — RETURN TO SETTLEMENT.

SUCH a night as we passed at our anchorage among the mangroves, none of us are likely soon to forget. No sooner was the thunder-storm over than clouds of mosquitoes and sand-flies filled the

air, and absolutely tortured us the livelong night. Even the negro "Bob," who lay rolled up in a sail on deck near me, moaned and groaned in a manner that proved that his tough body was suffering severely, nor could a soul on board get a minute's sleep that night. At last the welcome daylight arrived, and it was with no little astonishment that we found ourselves surrounded by a forest every tree of which was covered, root and branch, with thick clusters of oysters.

Rising to a height of forty or fifty feet above the water and mud, a dense growth of mangroves clothed the shore and studded the lagoon with forest islets. The lower branches, stems, and spider-like limbs of every mangrove tree, within reach of high-tide, were completely crusted with a compact mass of oysters, of a species known in Florida as "coon" oysters. We gathered a branch and ate some, but found the flavour bitter; the racoons, however, are very fond of these tree-oysters, and devour them greedily, whence they get the name of "coon" oysters. Not only did these oysters cover the trees, but on every mud-bank as well as on the shores they lay in heaps three or four feet in

depth. Large deposits of the common oyster rose nearly to the surface of the water a few hundred yards from the schooner, so lowering a boat we pulled to the oyster-bank, and in half-an-hour had filled the boat with some of the fattest and best oysters I ever tasted.

Soon after sunrise we perceived, through our glasses, that sail was being hoisted on board a small cutter which lay at anchor by the western bank of the lagoon, near the settlement called St. Lucie, about four miles distant from our anchorage. In an hour afterwards the cutter came alongside, and we were boarded by three men, who announced themselves as the revenue-officers residing at Fort Capron, and requested to know whence we came and what our business was.

On perceiving our mate, most hearty greetings and hand-shakings were exchanged between these old friends, who had not met for ten years, when blockade-running had been the occupation of both parties. Many cargoes of all sorts had been run in at Jupiter Inlet, which was then open, and at Indian River Inlet, before the Northerners discovered the traffic, and many a good tale we heard

related by our mate and the revenue-officers, as they sat on deck, about their hair-breadth escapes and occasional captures by the Federal cruisers after chases through the mangroves, in which the Northern sailors generally lost themselves, while the blockade-runners generally escaped by their superior local knowledge.

Returning in the revenue-cutter to St. Lucie, we proceeded to the house of the principal resident, Mr. James Payne, where we were introduced to Professor ———, a naturalist, well-known as a contributor to the New York journals under the *nom-de-plume* of "Fred. Beverley."

This gentleman and party who had just returned from an expedition to Lake Okeechobee, accompanied us as we travelled northward from St. Lucie, and gave us a most interesting account of the five weeks he and his party had spent in exploring every inlet and lagoon of that little-known and hitherto unexplored body of water.

The following account of the expedition, sent by the Professor in a letter to the New York "Forest and Stream," contains the best summary of the many conversations we had relative thereto, when

gathered round the camp-fire, or floating on the sluggish waters of the St. John River. It is dated from St. Lucie, March 18th, 1874.

"We left St. Lucie, Indian River, the 14th February, and returned March 17th, having successfully accomplished the expedition to Lake Okceehobee and the Everglades. It was my intention to have a boat transported to the Kissimmee River, and sail down that river into and around Lake Okeechobee. This plan has been adhered to and has resulted in a complete success. There is but one practicable route to Okeechobee, that *viâ* the Kissimmee River.* There are, however, two routes to that river, the one I adopted being, as stated, from St. Lucie, across the country to the location of old Fort Bassinger on the Kissimmee River. The first ten miles is through low open pine woods, very wet in the Winter months, through which flow two deep creeks, the "Five Mile," and the "Ten Mile." From Ten Mile Creek the course

* The Professor is mistaken here, as there is another practicable route, as I have already mentioned, viâ, the Caloosahatchee River to Fort Thompson, and thence by road across the prairie to the site of old Fort Centre, on a navigable creek flowing into Lake Okeechobee.

is north of west for twenty-four miles, at first over the Alpattie Flats, submerged as late as March, and dry and alkaline in the dry season; later a short, wiry grass covers them, and shallow ponds, dry in the dry season, occur at intervals. The clumps of cypress here are characteristic of this section, being in long curving lines, resembling mountains at a distance. At intervals of half a dozen miles, pine islands occur with opportunities for camping.

"Sixteen miles from Ten Mile Creek, twenty-six from St. Lucie, the prairies of the St. John are taken and kept until the old military road from Fort Capron to Tampa is struck, when the course is due west for five miles through a belt of timber to the Kissimmee prairies. This belt runs nearly north and south, separating the prairies of the Kissimmee from those of the St. John River and the Alpattie Flats. The road over the prairies is rather obscure, as also is that to the timber upon the other side; the course is south-west. The prairie is dotted with pine-islands, the last one—in which lives the only settler on the route, Judge Parker—is over two miles in width. The Kissimmee at the

ford is about fifty yards wide, though it sometimes overflows its banks for two miles upon the eastern side. We had to wade a mile before launching our boat. The settlers near the river knew nothing of the distance from the Fort Bassinger ford down to the lake, but thought it to be sixty miles. We found it about fifty-five miles, and it took us two days to reach the lake. The river is extremely crooked, the current swift, and the water the best in South Florida.

"The width of the ford is maintained throughout almost its entire length, though narrowing in places near its mouth. During the first thirty miles are occasional live-oaks and maple-bluffs, but beyond that the river runs through vast plains of cane and saw-grass, and between low willows. Many lagoons make up from the river. Isolated clumps of magnolia grow in the marsh, appearing like large trees in the distance. Ten miles from the Fort is a settler's cabin, the last on the river. Twenty miles from the lake is the last oak, and three miles from the lake a large cypress, from which a view of the lake can be obtained. The Kissimmee as it enters the lake forms a bay a mile in width and

depth, filled with lilies and water-lettuce. There are two cypress trees near its mouth, but all around is marsh.

"The most conspicuous birds on the river were the limpkin or crying-bird, the white ibis, white heron, snake-bird, and vulture. Black bass are plentiful and large; perch, cat-fish, and bream also abound. All the way down, on either side, is a pine ridge, from three to five miles away, sometimes approaching the river. It spreads out as it nears the lake, and maintains the same distance of the west side, merging itself in the cypress bordering the eastern shore. It is a little over a mile to the first projection of the bay west, where cypress and grass shoals present a dreary appearance. Back of this, however, is a drift of sand, upon which grows a thin belt of elm, maple, and elderberry, interlaced and overgrown with large grape vines. Back of this sand, which must be covered at high water, is a dark lagoon, filled with alligators. A mile further is a camping-ground, used by Indians when hunting, all cypress. The sand here is six inches above the lake, and a quiet lagoon affords shelter for a boat. Detached belts of cypress and marsh occur next, and the only place

suitable for camping is ten miles south-west. Mulberry trees occur there, also ash, maple, boxwood, cypress, India-rubber, and elderberry. There are gigantic cypresses six feet in diameter, completely enclosed in the India-rubber, and covered with ivy.

"The shore tends south-west for about fifteen miles from the Kissimmee, where a long cypress hammock ends in a lone palmetto. Here a deep bay makes in some three miles, and is about five miles in width. At the end of this bay, the palmetto spurs from the main ridge approached within a mile. All south of this is an unbroken marsh, deeply indented with bays, from which blind creeks or "sloughs" ramify in every direction. Due south of this palmetto point is a low willow island, with but a few inches of sand above water, covered with nests of heron and snake-bird.

"A marsh extends to this island, and south of it is another deep bay. Below this island the shore tends southward for about eight miles, then the dip is south-east, a desolate region, with a low dark line of willows bordering the shore. It has a very

deceptive appearance this same shore, as various shades, from the light of the grass shoals to the dark of the willows, make it seem very high, and the traveller is only disenchanted by a close inspection. About thirty miles south by west of the Kissimmee is the only island in the lake affording foot-hold to man. It is one and a half miles long, and four miles from the south-west shore. It runs north-west and south-east, and is dry upon its eastern or lake side, marshy on its western or shore side. It is no where more than a foot above the level of the water, a dry sand ridge covered with india-rubber, ash, and sweet bay, with a few pau-paus in fruit and flower. Nearly half an acre at one end was covered with the vines of the wild gourd. Upon both sides and at either end is a thick growth of willow, with some cypress. The northern end is covered with the dark vines of the "ipomea," in which hundreds of the white herons and roseate spoon-bill ibis had built their nests. From a tall cypress near, the shore can be traced for many miles, with a few palmetto spurs from the main ridge, some five miles back.

"Due south of this island is a sand beach, a mile in

length, covered with large cypress. It is but thirty feet wide backed by interminable marsh. Some rare minute fossil shells were found here. A bay two miles deep is found south of this point, and thence the shore bends south-east. There are three projecting points from the main marsh of this, the southern end of Lake Okeechobee, covered with a vegetation strikingly different from that of the western and northern shores. It is here that the water filters through the grassy, marshy run to the south. The low custard-apple is the only tree here. Joint grass and lilies are thickly filled in, the whole forming a mass easily permeated by the water. The lake terminates in three great bays, from five to six miles in depth, curving easterly. If there are any streams leading out of them, they are not navigable, or even discernible. Nearly opposite the island before mentioned, a creek comes in, large in some places. Fort Centre, a military post in the last Indian war, was six miles from the lake upon this creek.

"After this succession of bays and marshy points the shore suddenly turns northward, and vegetation assumes a different appearance. Cypress appear

here and there, and a thick sprinkling of ash and palmetto. About four miles from the commencement of the northward dip, the shore turns north-east. Three miles south of this curve is a group of three islands, about two miles in length. They curve from south to north-east, and are nearly submerged, only covered with ash apparently and low willows. At this curve in the main shore ends the Everglades, and commences a cypress belt that extends north-east for thirty miles. The beach here is composed of disintegrated shells, and there are many species of salt-water shells thrown upon the shore. Fragments of coquina were also found here, and tracks of racoons and rabbits, the first seen since leaving the north-west shore. Moccassin-snakes were unusually abundant, and unwound themselves from nearly every fallen tree.

"A belt of cypress, in which are mingled all the trees mentioned as occurring in the hammocks of the north-west shore, backs this shell beach, the only breaks in which, to within two miles of the Kissimmee, are, first, a deep sound fifteen miles south-east of the Kissimmee, and a bay two miles from that river. This latter bay so much resembles

that of the Kissimmee that it is puzzling unless examined thoroughly. Taylor's Creek and another empties into the lake within ten miles of the Kissimmee, but their channels are so choked with water-lettuce and lilies that an experienced eye is required to discern them.

"The lake is about forty miles long by twenty-five in width. Its length is greatest from the mouth of the Kissimmee river south-east, its breadth near the centre. It is very shallow, and grass shoals extend for miles into the lake. Nowhere did we find a greater depth than twelve feet. In fish, Okeechobee is deficient; such is the violence of the storms there that it is often stirred to its very centre, and no fish of ordinary mould can survive such a stirring up; fish-food also, the crustacea, &c., is scarce. Alligators are not so numerous as one might expect, except in the lagoons and at the creek mouths.

"Birds are not abundant, with the exception of fish-haws, crying-bird, snake-bird, and heron. During all our voyage we saw but one man besides our party, and the only evidence of any people having ever lived there was in the remains of two villages,

the houses sunken to the ground and the plantations overrun with the wild growth of the swamp, upon the eastern shore, eleven miles east of the Kissimmee river. Bananas, pau-paus, sugar-cane, and guavas were growing there in wild luxuriance. The villages belonged to a portion of the Okeechobee tribe of Seminoles, now living near the "Big Cypress," south-west of Lake Okeechobee."

To this graphic account of a lake about which an incredible amount of ignorance has hitherto existed, I have only to add that on the return journey the party were compelled to wade for two days through water up to the waist, having selected the more southerly route back. Mosquitoes and other stinging and flying vermin, alligators and snakes, made the journey still more trying, and one of the party, a young Bostonian, nearly died from fever contracted in these pestilential swamps, nor had he recovered from the effects even when I parted from him in New York many weeks afterwards.

CHAPTER XIX.

SETTLEMENT OF ST. LUCIE—THE "ULTIMA THULE" OF HUNTERS — TURTLE PENS—THE MANATUS AUSTRALIS — INCREASE OF TRAVELLERS — DEPARTURE FOR THE NORTH—THE INDIAN RIVER — A SPORTING PARADISE OR NOT — THE NARROWS — SHORES OF THE LAGOON — OYSTER BANK ISLANDS — THE PELICANRY—THE BREAD PLANT—BLIND MOSQUITOES—CAMP ON SHORE — A NIGHT ON THE INDIAN RIVER — PHOSPHORIC FISH—ELBOW CREEK—COQUINA—MERRITT'S ISLAND—BURNHAM GROVE — ORANGE CULTURE IN FLORIDA — THE CRAZY HUNTER — SAD EFFECTS OF THE HURRICANE — REACH SAND POINT—HEAVY STORM—HARVEY'S HOTEL.

NEAR the site of old Fort Capron, and three miles above that of Fort Pierce, on the west bank of the St. Lucie Sound, is the settlement of St. Lucie. It consists of a few wooden houses straggling along the bank of the Sound, between the site of the two

forts. Being the only kind of hamlet in Brevard county, formerly called St. Lucie county, it is the county town, and possesses a couple of stores and a post-office. The principal inhabitants, the Smith and Payne families, have small clearings planted with corn, melons, bananas, &c; but the chief business is stock-raising, the stock being grazed on the prairies at the back of the settlement, extending to the Kissimmee river.

St. Lucie is usually the Ultima Thule of tourists and hunters on the east coast, nor do many penetrate so far south; fair accommodation can be obtained by parties staying at the settlement for hunting or fishing, while, some few miles up the St Lucie river, deer and turkey are tolerably numerous, and good camping ground can be found.

The settlers own small cutters and schooners, which can be hired for about three dollars a day, either to travel north to the Mosquito Lagoon and St. Augustine, or south to the St. Lucie river and light-house at Jupiter Inlet, the end of boat-travel by the inside lagoons, one hundred miles from the settlement at Miami.

Besides cattle-raising, the settlers at St. Lucie do a considerable business in turtles, which abound in the lagoons, and when captured are confined in turtle-pens, as the wooden enclosures are called, formed of split rails stuck upright in the water, near the western shores of the lagoon. So remote, however, is the settlement that it is extremely difficult to find a market for the turtles, and an offer was made to our skipper soon after our arrival of a very remunerative freight, if he would convey a hundred turtles to Key West, to be there disposed of.

Besides the turtle, the Manatee (*Manatus Australis*) is occasionally captured in these waters, but is now becoming scarce. The last one taken was exhibited in Jacksonville, a strange-looking animal, from nine to ten feet in length, weighing fifteen hundred pounds, and appearing like a mixture of the seal and hippopotamus. It was shot while feeding on the banks of the Indian River, near the Inlet, but we were not fortunate enough to see any of these animals alive.

Altogether, the settlement at St. Lucie appeared to me more prosperous than any we had seen since

leaving Manatee, in West Florida, and the tide of travel, which is yearly increasing along these inland lagoons on the eastern coast, is likely to put into the pockets of the settlers money enough still further to promote its growth.

At the time of our arrival, all the tourists and hunters had already taken their departure for the North, Professor "Fred. Beverley," and his companions of the expedition to Lake Okeechobee, alone remaining at the settlement. As they were anxious to lose no time before proceeding northward, we joined our forces, and hired a cutter to convey us to the settlement of Sand Point, a hundred miles distant, near the northern extremity of the Indian River.

With considerable trouble we got the Professor's miscellaneous collection stowed on board, consisting of bird-skins, turtle-shells, dried flowers, and bottles innumerable, full of snakes, scorpions, toads, and other horrid reptiles beloved by the Professor. Then after bidding farewell to Mr. Payne, and wishing a safe exit from the inlet and return voyage to the skipper and mate of the "Ida MacKay," we assisted the one negro who formed the crew

of our cutter to hoist sail, and at five A.M on the 9th April, a faint southerly breeze bore us slowly, but steadily, on our northward course.

Throughout the Eastern states of America, the Indian River of Florida is spoken and written of as the "sportsman's Paradise," abounding in unequalled hunting and beautiful scenery. A wide arm of the sea, with perfectly flat banks, and running straight as an arrow, cannot well have any pretensions to scenery, nor has the Indian River in truth anything pretty about it, except its name and the foliage of the dense timber which clothes both banks. As to game, the guns of sportsmen have driven most of it away from the vicinity of the river, though a little way up some of the inflowing creeks tolerable sport may still be had. The puma and ocelot still sneak through the thick jungle, but good dogs are necessary to find them, and good dogs cannot be obtained in the neighbourhood of the Indian River. The river, as this lagoon is termed, extends for about a hundred miles from St. Lucie Sound and the inlet we entered by on the south, to the Mosquito lagoon on the north, with which

it is connected by an artificial canal, five hundred yards long and ten feet wide.

The waters, which are salt, abound in fish and oyster-beds, which interfere considerably with the navigation, rising to within a couple of feet of the surface. The width of the lagoon is from sixty yards, at the north entrance to the Narrows, to six miles, near the settlement of Sand Point. Its average width is about three miles, but so shoal is the water near the banks that we had frequently to wade about a quarter of a mile when wishing to land.

The narrow strip of land which separates the lagoon from the sea is only a few feet in height, covered with a growth of mangrove, cabbage-palm and palmetto in the southern half, pine and palmetto in the northern. The western shore is marshy, with densely timbered hammocks, behind which, about half a mile from the water, runs a ridge averaging half a mile across, covered with pine, oak, and palmetto. Occasionally this ridge approaches the water's edge, and affords the only camping-grounds obtainable on the west shore of the lagoon. These marshes with mud shores give a gloomy appearance

to the Indian River, which I did not expect to find, and only here and there did we see any of the beautiful white silvery sand to which we had become accustomed on the southern and western shores of Florida.

About twelve miles above St. Lucie, we entered what are called the "Narrows," where navigation became difficult, and we were continually bumping and scraping over the oyster-reefs, though only drawing two feet of water. On many of these oyster-reefs the mangrove trees had struck root, and thus formed islands, which are continually growing and still further encroaching on the narrow channel yet left on the western side of the lagoon.

To a stranger, it would be impossible to find a way through these innumerable reefs and islands, but our sable combination of captain, pilot, and crew made no error, and a couple of hours before sundown we emerged from the Narrows by a kind of natural gateway where the banks approached each other, and, when we looked back, appeared to meet, for no opening was visible. Above the Narrows we came to the greatest curiosity of the Indian River, known as the Rookery, situated on the east bank.

This so-called rookery is in fact a pelicanry, being the abode of some tens of thousands of these birds, which for centuries have built their nests in a forest of tall trees, now dead. Their stems and branches stand bare and gaunt, crusted with white from the pelicans' droppings, and supporting between their highest branches the roughly constructed nests of these birds. Though pelicans abound throughout Florida and its islands, in no other spot do they appear to have congregated in such enormous numbers as in this Indian River pelicanry.

At sunset the wind dropped, so on reaching St. Sebastian river, a considerable fresh-water creek flowing in on the west bank, we pitched our camp for some hours' rest and supper. Our naturalist fellow-traveller occupied every spare moment in filling still more bottles with every stinging and biting reptile he could come across, till supper was nearly over and pipes lit, when at last we induced him to join the circle round the camp-fire, and relate some of his Okeechobee experiences.

Near our camp grew great quantities of the plant called by the Indians the "white koonta" or bread-plant, a species of "zamia," with large fern-like

leaves, resembling much the "Osmunda regalis," or royal fern of our own island, and forming the chief undergrowth of a rich cabbage-palm hammock under which our tents were pitched. Clouds of what are called in Eastern Florida the blind mosquito filled the air, and crowded into the saucepan in which we boiled our coffee; but, as the blind mosquito differs from the "galley-nippers" of Western Florida in the essential particular of not biting human beings, we stood their presence with equanimity, and drank our decoction of coffee and boiled mosquitoes without sensible diminution of appetite.

After enjoying a short but refreshing sleep, soon after midnight, when a light breeze sprang up from the south we struck camp, stowed the camp equipage on board, and hoisting sail continued our northern course. As the soft southern breeze filled our sails, the water parted before the cutter's bows in literal streams of liquid fire, gleaming with phosphoric light, revealing a spectacle as novel to us as it was beautiful. We could see jew-fish, saw-fish, and other denizens of these southern waters, disturbed by the passing boat, dart beneath the surface of the water

in a blaze of light, which clearly defined every scale on their bodies, while their rapid course was marked by a trail of light like that left by a meteor in the firmament above.

In the morning we put into a little natural harbour, on the west side of the lagoon, known as Elbow Creek, whence it is proposed to cut a canal to the head-waters of the St. John River at Lake Washington, a distance of only six miles. Like many other public works, however, which would be a great benefit to Florida, it has long been proposed, but no funds are forthcoming to execute the works.

The banks of the creek rise to the unusual height of twelve or fourteen feet, and are composed of "coquina," a curious conglomerate of broken shells and pebbles, cemented together by carbonate of lime into a mass as hard as soft stone. This ledge of coquina rock is worn into deep holes, and forms numerous angles, against which we were nearly trying the strength of the cutter's timbers as we missed stays when tacking in, and ran within a few feet of the rock before we could bring her round. Eventually we dropped anchor in the

mouth of the creek, and disembarking, clambered up the bank to the house of Mr. Houston, a settler residing in that locality. There breakfast was hospitably provided for those who preferred the more civilized form of a meal at table to one at our camp-fire, which soon blazed merrily on the bluff.

Shortly after leaving Elbow Creek we reached the southern point of Merritt's Island, the largest in the lagoon, being thirty miles long, mostly covered with pine trees, and inhabited by some half dozen settlers. That portion of the Indian River which runs to the east of this island is called the Banana River, on the eastern shore of which is an orange grove celebrated in Eastern Florida as Burnham's Grove, the property of a settler of that name who resides at Cape Canaveral light-house, five miles distant across the strip of land which divides the river from the sea.

Most of the settlers on the Indian River cultivate the orange, and throughout Florida the Indian River oranges have quite a name, and sell at the exorbitant price of five cents each. I ate many of these oranges, and found them extremely sweet and juicy, of great

size and with thick rinds, but in my opinion they are far inferior in flavour to the Spanish or Italian orange. There is also a serious drawback to the prosperity of orange culture in Florida, in the fact that the tree suffers severely from the ravages of insects and from frosts, though the latter are by no means as severe as frequently occur during the Winters in the north of Italy; but in the climate of Florida the orange tree appears to be more delicate. Another curious feature of the orange produced in Florida is the fact of its not standing export, but rotting quickly after being plucked from the tree.

North of Merritt's Island, between the south point of the Mosquito Lagoon and Indian River, is another orange plantation of thirteen acres, called Dummett's Grove, which in good years is said to have produced a crop of more than a quarter of a million of oranges.

As we bowled along before a strong southerly breeze, we observed with surprise, on our port bow, the half-naked figure of a man standing up to his waist in water, at some distance from the west bank, gesticulating wildly as our cutter approached.

We sailed rapidly past at too great a distance to hear more than inarticulate cries, and soon the figure, which continued throwing its arms about, disappeared far astern. On sighting the figure, our boatman cautioned us not to mind him, saying that this wild gesticulator was a half crazy hunter who for years had lived on the banks of the Indian River, in a log hut which he had built himself, and round which he cultivated a small patch of garden. The hurricane of the previous October had carried away his hut bodily, and completely wrecked his little clearing, since which he had wandered about the forests and shores of the Indian River, wading into the water to hail every passing boat. From the occupants he would eagerly inquire for news of the outside world, and replenish his store of powder and shot when short of these commodities, but he never approached the neighbourhood of any settlement, and refused all offers of assistance. The terrible October storm which destroyed his solitary shanty seemed also to have destroyed the last remnants of reason in his brain, though his animal instinct led him still to keep body and soul together by the help of his trusty rifle.

Near the north part of Merritt's Island the breeze increased to a regular gale, raising a considerable sea in the lagoon, which was here from four to six miles in width, and sending us flying along at such a pace that we reached the settlement called Sand Point, at the north-western end of the Indian River, a hundred miles from St. Lucie, an hour before sunset. Disembarking at the second long wooden landing-stage, we shouldered our baggage and conveyed it to a small log-built store at the shore end of the pier, just in time to avoid a waterspout of rain, which, with the usual accompaniment of terrific thunder and lightning, continued to pour down for an hour. At the end of that time we procured a waggon from the store-keeper, and before night were safely housed at Harvey's hotel, situated about a mile back from the Indian River.

CHAPTER XX.

SETTLEMENT OF SAND POINT, OR TITUSVILLE—CHARGE FOR SAIL-BOATS—STORES—COLONEL H. F. TITUS—A FILIBUSTER TURNED HOTEL-KEEPER—THE INVALID—THE HUNTER'S ANCIENT COIN—A BUSHEL OF FLEAS—AN ENGLISH EMIGRANT—START WESTWARD—OUR TEAMSTER—A SAD STORY—DISAPPOINTED HOPES—EXPERIENCES OF A POOR MAN—CABBAGE-HAMMOCK—CATTLE-HERDERS—SONG BIRDS—A CYPRESS SWAMP—ATTACK BY MOSQUITOES—SIGHT LAKE HARNEY—THE DESERTED HOUSE—SAW-GRASS PLAIN—REACH THE ST. JOHN RIVER—CAMP ON ITS BANKS.

SAND POINT, or Titusville, as it is also called, and New Smyrna, twenty-five miles north on the Mosquito Lagoon, both in Volusia County, are the two settlements whence hunting-parties generally make their final start for the Indian River and St. Lucie

Sound. The usual charge for boats (small cutters of light draught), at either place is five dollars a-day, and a dollar and a-half a day for the boatman, but prices are rising so rapidly with the demand that the present cost is likely soon to be doubled. Stores, but not ammunition, can be procured at either place, but are better and cheaper brought from Jacksonville or Savannah.

Detached settlers' houses and a couple of stores compose the settlement of Sand Point, most of the houses standing on the high pine land at the back of a rich hammock, which extends from the lagoon about a mile in width. The principal hotel is situated on a point of land projecting into the Indian River, and is a large wooden building kept by Colonel H. F. Titus, a man well known throughout Florida. Having held a command under Walker in his filibustering expedition to Nicaragua, he is called colonel, and is both feared and disliked in the state he has now settled in. I concluded from what I heard and saw that he is an enterprising and energetic man, two very rare qualities in Southern Florida, but so fond of the game of the spider and the fly that he has made

everybody his enemy. Tourists, however, who had stayed at his hotel, told me they had been made very comfortable, and it is the only house worthy of the name of hotel at the settlement.

We had Harvey's hotel all to ourselves, with the exception of an unfortunate young man in the last stage of consumption, who evidently would never again see his Northern home, and a hunter who had just returned from an expedition to St. Lucie. The latter showed me a silver Spanish dollar, which he said he had found in one of the Indian mounds on the banks of the lagoon, it bore the inscription, "Carolus et Johan. Hisp. et Ind. reges," easily legible, and the arms of Spain. We could not come to terms as to the present value in green-backs of the old silver coin, so the hunter retained this relic of the Spanish occupation of Florida in the sixteenth century.

In few parts of Florida did we find fleas more abundant and hungry than at Sand Point, our landlord's remark that he "reckoned he would make his fortune if he could sell them at a dollar a bushel," being fully borne out by their numbers. There was but little cultivated land, only a few

patches in fact round the settlement, cattle and hogs being as usual the chief worldly wealth of the settlers, many of the latter animals were red-coloured, a variety very common among the Florida pigs. During our stay at Harvey's, an English emigrant from Missouri arrived with a waggon and mule team, which he had driven all the way from his former home in that state, a distance of over sixteen hundred miles. We hired his waggon and team to convey our baggage to Lake Harney, twenty miles distant, a little to the north-west from Sand Point. There we expected soon to find a steamer to convey us northward down the St. John River.

On quitting the settlement at Sand Point, a tolerably level and well marked track led us across an undulating country, covered with open pine-forest, with occasional hammocks, of the usual growth of cabbage-palm, water and live-oak, India-rubber, hickory, &c. ; and in nine miles we reached a deserted hut, near a hammock with a creek of fresh water running through it, where we halted to dine and rest the mules.

After our usual frugal mid-day meal of coffee,

fried bacon, hominy and biscuit, our teamster related to us the history of his migration from Missouri, a sad tale of disappointed hopes and expectations of wealth never to be realised. The glowing reports he had read of the fertility of Florida, and the certainty of attaining wealth almost without labour, had, he said, induced him to leave Missouri, where he had been settled about a year on a small farm. This farm he sold, purchasing a waggon and mule team with some of the proceeds of the sale; and pocketing the remaining dollars, he started on his long journey, and, after a drive of three months, reached Florida with the intention of there seeking a homestead. Every mile that he advanced through the country the settlers recommended him to go further south, saying that he would find the land better and more fertile a short journey to the southward.

Believing these false reports, he had travelled on further and yet further south, crossing Central Florida, and reaching the Indian River by following the old military roads. Instead of improving, the land grew poorer and poorer as he advanced, and the natural obstacles to his progress more for-

midable. At last all trace of road disappeared, and an impenetrable jungle barred his further progress to the south, when about half-way between Sand Point and the settlement of St. Lucie. Obliged to return as he could no longer advance, when we engaged his team to transport our baggage, he was working his way north again, a sadly disappointed man, cursing the lying immigration agents, cursing the settlers, and cursing the inhospitable soil and poverty of the country. He offered to sell us his waggon and team for money enough to pay his steam-boat and railway fare back to Missouri, and leave a hundred dollars in his pocket to start again in life.

Leaving the deserted hut where we had rested during the hottest hours of the day, the track soon led us down from the pine-land into one of the largest and most fertile tracts of hammock-land in East Florida, known as "Cabbage Hammock." Being held under Spanish grant, none of it has been homesteaded, or any attempts made at cultivating the land, which strikes the eye as being of extraordinary fertility, judging from the luxuriant vegetation with which it is clothed. Small savannas inter-

sected the hammock, covered with fresh green grass, and brilliant with flowers chiefly of the orchid tribe.

On these meadows a large number of cattle were feeding, herded by a party of three rough-looking men whom we met seated under a group of palms, armed with rifle and revolver. They had apparently scared away all the big game from the neighbourhood, as we saw nothing to shoot for supper except some of the Florida quail, and a couple of sand-hill cranes stalking solemnly among the pines. The trees were, however, full of birds of beautiful song or plumage, the mocking-bird, red-bird, ivory-bill, and many others of the wood-pecker tribe, green parroquet, robin, &c., which, as the intense heat of the day began to abate, filled the forest with the sound of various notes.

Beyond the Cabbage Hammock we crossed more pine-land and then a deep cypress-swamp, through which ran a black-looking creek, in which the waggon-wheels sank up to the axletrees; mocassin snakes unwound themselves from rotting trees lying half buried in the fetid ooze, and mosquitoes drove ourselves and the mules nearly wild by their per-

sistent attacks. It was a considerable relief to both man and beast when we again emerged from the cypress-swamp on to the high and dry pine-land. Crossing a few miles of this open forest, through which were scattered small cypress-ponds, we saw before us a belt of cabbage-palms, through which the occasional glimpses we caught of water reddened by the setting sun, told us we were approaching Lake Harney.

Passing the deserted habitation of a former settler, where the banana and orange trees had now mingled with the natural growth of the soil, and the owl and buzzard lodged among the roofless ruins of the house, we made our way through the thick belt of cabbage-palms, and emerged on a wide treeless plain, through the centre of which wound the St. John River, till it entered the southern end of Lake Harney, whose waters bounded the plain on the north.

A drive of a couple of miles through the tall saw-grass, which grew as high as the backs of our mules, over ground which at this season of the year was dry and firm, and we reached the banks of the St. John River just as night was closing in.

There we unharnessed the mules, weary with the length of the journey and intense heat of the day, and turned them loose to graze among the tall grass. A dry sandy bank was selected for the camping-ground, and there, under a wide-spreading cedar-tree, we prepared to pass the night by the side of the dark and silent flowing river, on whose waters we were to accomplish the remainder of our journey to Jacksonville, a distance of about two hundred and fifty miles.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ST. JOHN RIVER—CONTEMPLATED CANAL—A FORMER LAGOON—THE HIGHWAY OF TRAVEL IN FLORIDA—STEAM NAVIGATION—TOURISTS—HOTELS—WILD FOWL—ARRIVAL OF STEAMER—LAKE HARNEY—THE "VOLUSIA"—EXTINCTION OF ALLIGATORS — VEGETATION ON THE RIVER BANKS — THE "PISTIA SPATULATA" — A PASSING SHOT — LAKE JESSUP—FEARFUL STORM IN A CYPRESS SWAMP — FIRE-FLIES — A SOUTHERN NIGHT—STEAMING BY TORCH-LIGHT—LAKE MONROE — THE "CITY OF ENTERPRISE" — THE BROCK-HOUSE—GREEN SPRING—MELLONVILLE—NUMBERS OF SMALL BIRDS—THE OSPREY AND THE EAGLE—BLUE SPRING—SMALL SETTLEMENTS — LAKE GEORGE — DRAYTON'S ISLAND—WELAKA—INTENSE HEAT—THE OCKLAWAHA RIVER—THE "FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH"—PALATKA—THE LOWER ST. JOHN—CHANGE OF VEGETATION — ST. AUGUSTINE — ITS STREETS AND VISITORS — A WOODEN RAILROAD TO TOCOI—GREEN COVE SPRING—MANDARIN—OUR RETURN TO JACKSONVILLE

THE St. John River, unlike most other rivers in the world, flows from south to north, until within sixteen miles of its mouth, where it turns abruptly to the

east. Rising in the swamps to the north-east of Lake Okeechobee, it has a total length of about four hundred miles. The slope of its bed is so gradual that at Lake Harney, a distance of over two hundred and fifty miles from its mouth, it is only three feet six inches above tide level, as was proved by a state survey made a few years ago, with the object of constructing a canal from the lake to the Indian River.

At Lake Washington, some three hundred and forty miles up the river, it is only six miles distant from an inlet of the ocean. The tides are perceptible as far as Lake George, two hundred miles up, and the river water is salt or brackish at least as far up as Lake Harney, though that may be partly owing to the numerous salt springs which flow into it. The colour of the water is a rich brown, with a greasy scum perceptible on it, like that we noticed on some of the rivers emptying into the Gulf of Mexico.

The river is supposed once to have been a lagoon like the Indian River, converted by the gradual rising of the land into its present form of a sluggish river with a current of about one mile an hour, opening

out every few miles into large sheets of shallow water which are known by various names as lakes, but in reality form part of the river itself. The St. John now forms the chief highway of travel in Florida, and is navigated by sea-going steamers as far as Palatka. Thence by smaller craft, running several times a week, as far as Enterprise, whence still smaller steamers run during the Winter as far as Salt Lake, which is connected with the St. John by a tortuous creek. After the beginning of April, however, the terminus of steam travel is Lake Harney, owing to the depth of water being insufficient from that time till the rains have set in. A steamboat has penetrated as far south as Lake Washington, sixty miles above Lake Harney, but considerable outlay will be necessary to make the river navigable so far, the shallowness of the water, and the immense quantities of water-lilies and other aquatic plants, offering a serious bar to navigation.

Thousands of tourists annually ascend the St. John River and its sole large tributary, the Ocklawaha, and numerous large hotels have been erected for their accommodation along the banks of these rivers

in favourable localities, usually near the spot where rises some one of the immense number of mineral springs which empty into them. The most southern of the hotels along the St. John is at present at Enterprise, on Lake Monroe, south of which only a very small percentage of Winter tourists penetrate, consisting of those sportsmen who are bound for the Indian River and neighbourhood, and a few travellers and professors exploring the country.

South of Lake Harney the river winds through wide flats overgrown with saw-grass, once covered by the waters of the lagoon, as they still are by those of the St. John during the rainy season. The forests bounding these flats, or marshes, which have an average width of three or four miles, consist of cabbage-palm and pine, in which are a good number of deer, while the marshes are alive with wild fowl during the Winter. Even at the time we were there hundreds of wild fowl still remained, though the large flocks had migrated northward two months previously.

At length the long expected steamer from the north arrived in Lake Harney, and the following afternoon ourselves and our friends from Okeechobee

were safely stowed on board, the anchor was hove and we commenced our voyage down the St. John River. The craft on board which we now travelled was named the "Volusia," and built like a Thames barge with a house on the top of it. She had small side-paddles, and a double rudder in the wash of the wheels, a square stern, and a draught of eighteen inches forward and two feet aft when laden. She had sleeping accommodation for about twenty passengers in clean little cabins, and though her utmost speed did not exceed seven knots an hour, she was a most comfortable craft to travel in, and admirably suited to the shallow and tortuous waters of the Upper St. John.

We had a miscellaneous cargo on board, of oranges from the Indian River, green and yellow parroquets from the neighbourhood of Lake Harney, crimson and white air-plants in full flower from the forests round the same lake, mail-bags from the Southern settlements, fowl and cattle for the Northern markets, and last, but not least odoriferous, the Professor's collection of skins, bottled snakes, &c., from Lake Okeechobee.

Crossing Lake Harney, which is about four miles

in length and breadth, with flat, densely timbered and unpicturesque shores, we entered the out-flowing river, here very narrow and winding at acute angles, but with a generally easterly direction as far as Lake Jessup. Any unfortunate little alligator seen basking on a sand-bank, or venturing to show its black head above the water lilies, was instantly greeted with a shower of bullets. So long has this practice been going on that alligators which once abounded in the St. John River are now nearly extinct, nor did we see a single one north of Lake George, or one of any size between Lake George and Lake Harney.

A rich and beautiful vegetation clothed both banks of the river, except here and there where the timber receded and an immense expanse of marsh extended back to the distant forest, covered with saw-grass, among which were occasional "islands" of timber. In other places we came on broad savannas on which fed herds of cattle, or on dreary cypress swamps, with a rank and tangled undergrowth of vines sweeping the dark waters. In some places the channel of the river was completely blocked with water-lilies and a peculiar kind

of water-plant, the "Pistia Spatulata," which collected in such masses as to form islands, at which we dashed, when the mass parted to unite again in our wake.

A number of ducks fed among the water-plants, many of them with young broods already able to flap along the surface of the water. At a bend of the river we suddenly came on a flock of turkeys scratching in the sand, out of which a lucky shot into the brown brought down a magnificent old gobbler, which we stopped to secure. It weighed over forty pounds, and afforded the whole of our party a sumptuous repast.

Touching at a settler's house on the left bank, on a high mound, for wood and fresh water, we reached Lake Jessup just before sunset, amid a fearful storm of thunder, lightning, and rain. Crossing the north-east end of this lake, which is seventeen miles long and five wide, but very shallow, we again entered the narrow river as the storm increased in fury, and such Egyptian darkness succeeded to the sunset that we were forced to lay-to on the ridge of a cypress swamp, lest we should run against some of the lofty trunks which

rose branchless from the water, or the cypress knees, as the distorted stems of stunted cypress are called.

There we remained for a couple of hours, while the storm raged with ever increasing fury, the lightning blazing with a vividness which revealed the deepest recesses of the swamp and made awful the darkness which immediately succeeded, the thunder rolled unceasingly, and a deluge of rain poured down; a tall cypress tree near us was split from top to bottom by the electric fluid during this magnificent but terrible war of the elements. In a couple of hours the storm ceased, the black clouds disappeared as if by magic, the stars shone out with even more than their usual brilliancy, and countless myriads of fire-flies filled the air, the trees, and the surface of the water with their tiny flashes of light, as they darted hither and thither, in numbers the like of which I never saw before.

The storm over, we continued our voyage, and through hour after hour of the still, hot night we sat smoking in the bows of the boat as we advanced down the narrow river. The endless succession of

hammock, forest, and cypress swamp through which we turned and twisted, assumed all sorts of strange and weird forms, as the light of the torches of pitch-pine which we carried in the bows fell on them. The screech of the owl or note of the whip-poor-will, with the occasional cry of some wild beast in the forest, mingled with the regular beat of the paddles till the small hours of the morning, when the timber receded, and the river spread out into another large sheet of water, some twelve miles long by four broad, called Lake Monroe. Then we turned into bed for a few hours' sleep, to be soon roused up again by the noise made in mooring the steamer alongside the wharf at Enterprise.

While discharging and loading cargo, we made acquaintance with the "city" of Enterprise, the county seat of Volusia County. It consists of one large wooden hotel called the "Brock House," a county court-house, post-office, a few stores, and half-a-dozen frame dwelling-houses. The hotel is situated on a high shell-mound on the lake-shore, and is much resorted to by sportsmen and invalids during the Winter; these had all taken their de-

parture before our arrival, and the hotel was nearly deserted.

Half a mile from the hotel is a mineral spring called "Green Spring," of a greenish colour, strongly impregnated with sulphur; its basin is twenty-five yards in diameter and a hundred feet in depth. A couple of hundred yards beyond is a second smaller sulphur spring, and near it a source of saline waters. Some fine orange groves at the side of the hotel extending along the shore, and little pleasure-boats at anchor, or drawn up on the beach, gave an air of civilization to the place. In the Winter tolerable deer-hunting on horseback can be obtained in the neighbouring forests, and the lake abounds in fish, but there is not much sport of any other sort to be obtained.

A stage-coach, in connection with the steamers, runs across to New Smyrna, on the Mosquito Lagoon, thirty miles distant; from which point, as I have already mentioned, some travellers make their final start for the Indian River.

From Enterprise we crossed to the western shore of the lake, on which stand two hotels and some villas, forming the settlement of Mellonville, a name

originating from old Fort Mellon, on the site of which it stands. The orange groves are the chief feature at Mellonville, and the place has a generally thriving appearance; new buildings are springing up and stores increasing, so that it is likely soon to become the chief town of Orange County, in which it is situated.

A few miles beyond Mellonville the river again narrowed to a width of fifty or sixty yards, and we twisted in and out through cypress swamps and meadows of tall grass, hammocks of live-oak, water-oak, and cabbage-palm festooned with Spanish moss, vild vines, the crimson trumpet-flower, and innumerable parasites. Here and there small alligators showed among the water-lilies, but they were very shy and scarce, and the most interesting feature of this portion of the river was the immense number of large birds which rose constantly before us. Flocks of the black and white wood-ibis flew out of the branches of the forest trees; blue-herons, snowy-herons, white ibis, pelicans and cranes rose from the shallow waters at every turn of the river. Above us the osprey poised in mid-air, then darted into the water to rise with a

fish in his claws, which he was quickly made to drop by the plundering bald-headed eagle soaring above, ever on the look-out to deprive the weaker osprey of his prey, which he would seize, when dropped, before it could reach the ground.

Twenty-five miles below Mellonville we reached Blue Spring, the most southern settlement of the English, when masters of the country. The spring is warm and sulphurous, with a sufficient body of water for the steamer to float in it at its confluence with the main river. and such clear water that every fish swimming below could be seen. Touching at four other landings, where were small settlements of two or three wooden houses with little groves of orange, lime, and banana trees, an hour before sunset we entered the largest expansion in the whole course of the river, called Lake George, a sheet of water eighteen miles long by twelve wide, below which is Little Lake George, seven miles long and four wide, so that the total length of this expansion of the river may be stated at twenty-five miles.

Lake George is spoken of by Americans as one of the most beautiful in the world, but to my mind such a term cannot with truth be applied to such an

immense sheet of water, without any mountains, or even hills, to form a background to the landscape. Back from the north-western shore, the land rises to the height of a few feet in a sandy ridge covered with pine and black-jack oak, called the Eteniah scrub, dividing the St. John from the Ocklawaha river; while all round the rest of the lake is low forest or dreary swamp land.

The islands at the north end of the lake make that part a little more picturesque. The largest, called Rembrandt, or Drayton's Island, is cultivated, and contains one of the largest orange groves on the river, but none of those traces of the aborigines spoken of by the old traveller Bartram, except some Indian mounds.

Twelve miles below Lake George we made fast alongside the landing at Welaka, situated on a high bluff on the east side of the river, in a heavy thunder storm, which lasted with but short intermissions all through one of the most intensely hot nights we had yet endured, my thermometer never registering lower than 90° Fahrenheit, while the damp heat of the atmosphere nearly suffocated us.

Opposite Welaka, the Indian name of the St.

John River, signifying a chain of lakes, is the mouth of the Ocklawaha river, navigated by steamboats for two hundred miles, as far as Okahumka, on Lake Harris, in Sumpter County. Great numbers of tourists make the excursion up as far as Silver Spring, a hundred miles from Welaka, so remarkable for the extraordinary transparency of the water that it was much venerated by the Indians, and is supposed to have been the "Fountain of Youth" spoken of by the Cacique to Juan Ponce de Leon.

From Welaka we steamed on for twenty-five miles, lighted by blazing pine-torches in the bows, till midnight, when we reached Palatka, on the western bank of the river, the chief town of Putnam County and the most southern settlement on the St. John worthy of the name of a town. There we passed the rest of the night, waiting till daylight to ship and discharge cargo, mails and passengers. Palatka is seventy-five miles from Jacksonville and is the terminus of the route of the large steamers from Savannah and Charleston. Situated on high ground, it extends some distance along the river banks and has a population of about fifteen hundred, with two good hotels, boarding-houses, stores,

churches and schools, altogether appearing a most thriving place. Lumbering and orange culture are the principal occupations of the inhabitants ; the large orange groves in the vicinity constitute the chief attraction of the place, always excepting the climate, which is highly recommended as a Winter resort for consumptive patients.

A short morning stroll along the sandy roads, and we again continued our voyage. The river below Palatka soon opens out to a width of two to three miles, which it retains throughout the rest of its course to the Atlantic, and is generally termed the Lower St. John throughout this distance ; above Palatka it is the Upper St. John. As we advanced down the lower river, the character of the country changed considerably. The banks became higher and less swampy ; forests of pine, live-oak, magnolia and laurel succeeded to the cabbage-palms and palmetto scrubs, the hammocks, savannas and saw-grass marshes, and though occasional cypress swamps occur down to the river's mouth, they became less numerous. Settlements, houses and orange groves increased in number, and the nature of the country generally appeared to be one capable of supporting

a considerable population, which would be impossible on the Upper St. John, owing to the vast swamps and unhealthy climate of most of the surrounding country.

The attractions of the forest scenery and the strange tropical vegetation overhanging the narrow stream disappeared below Palatka, owing to the width of the river, and the remainder of the voyage to Jacksonville we found monotonous and comparatively uninteresting, the banks being too distant to appreciate the beauty of the vegetation, except when touching at the settlements on either bank. Twenty-six miles below Palatka we reached Tocoi on the east bank, connected by a railway, fifteen miles long, with St. Augustine, a monotonous ride of three hours through pine-forests on wooden rails.

St. Augustine is historically interesting as the first permanent settlement built by the Spaniards on the North American continent; it is situated on the Atlantic coast, on a narrow peninsula formed by the Sebastian and Matanzas Rivers. The town is small, with many old Spanish buildings still existing; its streets are narrow and were formerly paved with

"coquina," of which conglomerate many of the buildings also are composed. Its climate is considered exceptionally healthy, and its two large hotels and numerous boarding-houses are crowded every Winter with invalids or pleasure seekers from the north. Some hunting parties also hire boats at St. Augustine, in which they sail to the Mosquito Lagoon and thence by the canal into the Indian River, but this route is less frequently chosen than the two I have before mentioned. A young American artillery officer, who travelled up from St. Augustine to New York with us, assured us that after a year's experience in garrison at the former place, he knew few nicer or more healthy quarters in the United States.

Between Tocoi and Jacksonville, a distance of forty-nine miles, two places deserve notice—Green Cove Springs, and close by Magnolia, forming a watering place so much frequented for rheumatism and skin diseases that it is called the Saratoga of Florida; and fifteen miles lower on the east bank, the pretty little settlement of Mandarin, consisting of some dozen of private houses almost concealed in thick groves of orange and lemon trees,

in one of which Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe spends her Winters.

Between Mandarin and Jacksonville, a distance of fifteen miles, the river banks are thickly studded with villas, and in the river bed are many masts and funnels of sunken steamers and ships, sad memorials of the Civil War of 1861-65. When, after an absence of nearly three months, we once more reached the wharf at Jacksonville, and thence proceeded to our old quarters at the International hotel, we found that our friends had been quite anxious about our safety, all the other tourists and hunters having long since returned from the south without bringing any tidings of our movements. On comparing notes, we found that we had taken the right course in seeking for sport along the Gulf counties, as though we had not killed as much big game as we had hoped to do, we had met with far better sport than any other hunting parties, and had explored a large extent of country altogether untravelled before.

CHAPTER XXII.

END OF OUR WILD LIFE — BREAK-UP OF THE PARTY — RIVAL ROUTES TO FLORIDA—LAND OR SEA THE BEST — START BY RAIL FOR SAVANNAH — ANOTHER TRAIN OFF THE TRACK — LAST NIGHT IN THE FORESTS OF FLORIDA — REACH SAVANNAH — EMBARK FOR NEW YORK — DEAD AND LIVING PASSENGERS—LAND ROUTE THE BEST—MEMORIES OF WILD LIFE IN FLORIDA.

WITH our return to Jacksonville ended our Wild Life in Florida, to the regret of every one of our party. Henceforth our routes diverged West, North, and East. My travelling companion M—— was bound west for New Orleans; the Doctor for his home in Augusta, Georgia; our Okeechobee

friends for Boston; myself for New York and England.

As I had reached Jacksonville by sea and river from Savannah, whither I had travelled by land from the North; I determined to return by land to Savannah, and thence by sea to New York, so as to be able to judge of the respective merits, or annoyances of the rival routes by land and sea. A Northern gentleman had remarked to me, when starting for Florida from the North: "If you go by land, you will wish you had gone by sea; and if you go by sea, you will wish you had gone by land." The first part of the assertion I was fully prepared to endorse. The long railway journey to Savannah, through a dreary succession of pine-forest and swamp, swamp and pine-forest, the wretched negro huts scattered through the forests, the ruined plantations, poverty-stricken people, and other evidences of the sad condition to which part of Southern Virginia, North and South Carolina and, in a less degree, Georgia, are now reduced, had both wearied and grieved me, and made me long to be on the healthy, open, sparkling sea; nor did my stay in Charleston tend to remove these gloomy

impressions, so fearfully are the effects of the Civil War still visible there, both in the state of the buildings and the condition of the citizens.

My return route from Jacksonville to Savannah being by railway, I took a through ticket to New York, including both land and sea transit, and presented myself at the railway depôt, as I had been warned to do, at the early hour of 6 a.m. It was, however, four hours later before we were able to start, owing to the line being blocked by the southward bound train having run off the rails, a circumstance so commonly happening that nobody expressed either surprise or impatience at the long delay

At last the telegraph announced all clear, and we commenced our journey. We followed the same route we had travelled when bound for Cedar Keys, as far as Baldwin, where the negro touts again besought us to try "real white folk's breakfast." From Baldwin, where we had formerly turned south-west, we continued our journey due west, through open pine-forest, with occasional creeks, small swamps and scattered settlements, consisting of two or three log-houses.

Lake City, the chief town of Columbia county, appeared a thriving little place, whence we still continued west to Live Oak, the capital of Suwannee County. There an old negress, called "Aunt Polly," had a table laid out on the platform, with "chicken fixins" and coffee, the only refreshments obtainable between Baldwin and Savannah, a journey of eighteen hours.

At Live Oak, we branched off due north by the Georgia connection railroad, continuing through the same sort of open pine-forest with palmetto undergrowth, but seeing occasional ridges, and even low hills. Near Suwannee City, we crossed the river of the same name celebrated in negro song, and a little beyond, reached the settlement called Jaspar City. Then, as night closed in, I retired to the Pullman car, to sleep for the last time in the forests of Florida, and awoke the next morning in the fair capital of Georgia. At Savannah I embarked on board the "Favourite Side-wheel S.S. San Jacinto," bound for New York, where my experiences made me endorse the warning of my Northern friend most fully. The ship was crowded with passengers, both living and dead; two coffins were placed

amidships, by the railing of the quarter-deck, labelled with the name and address of the occupant in full, while at least a dozen of the living passengers, including young and old, male and female, were in the last stage of consumption, and evidently just struggling home to die.

Though the weather was fine, and the living very fair, often during each of the four days which it took us to reach New York, I wished most sincerely that I had "gone by land."

Though long and tedious the journey from England to Florida must ever be, to the sportsman and naturalist it is well worth all the tedium and hardship. Even now, when living in the most luxurious city in the world, memories of the free and wild life we led in Florida rise before me, till I long again to find myself in camp under its graceful cabbage-palms, or sailing among its lonely mangrove-clad keys.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

RANGE OF THE THERMOMETER.

THE range of the thermometer in Florida is far less than in other states of the Union, and is as follows, at the principal stations on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, as determined by the observations of the Army Meteorological Department.

AT JACKSONVILLE, 1860.

	Highest.	Lowest.	Mean.
January	76	38	56
February	77	39	61
March	83	34	63
April	86	49	73
May	91	66	76
June	92	73	83

	Highest.	Lowest.	Mean.
July	96	74	84
August	94	75	81
September	86	64	79
October	85	62	70
November	79	39	62
December	78	40	54

Mean for the year ending December, 1860, 70·61 Fahr.

At Tampa Bay the mean of twenty-five years, ending 1870, was January, 61; February, 63; March, 67; April, 71; May, 76; June, 79; July, 80; August, 80; September, 78; October, 74; November, 66; December, 61. A mean for twelve months of 71·92 Fahrenheit.

At Punta Rassa the mean of each of the twelve months ending December 1873, was, January, 56; February, 61; March, 69; April, 77; May, 82; June, 84; July, 85; August, 82; September, 82; October, 71; November, 66; December, 63.

At Key West the mean of fourteen years ending 1870, was, January, 66; February, 68; March, 72; April, 75; May, 79, June, 81; July, 83; August, 82; September, 81; October, 78; November, 74; December, 71; or for the twelvemonths 76·51 Fahrenheit.

At St. Augustine the mean of twenty years ending, 1870, was, January, 57; February, 59; March, 63; April, 68; May, 73; June, 79; July, 80; August, 80; September,

78; October, 71; November, 64; December, 57; or for the twelve months, 69·61 Fahrenheit.

The following list of birds includes those only which I happened particularly to notice during our wanderings in Florida, on account either of their great numbers, or the beauty of their plumage or song.

Pelican.
Great white heron.
Florida blue heron.
Snowy heron.
Florida cormorant.
Bittern (or shy-pook).
Osprey (or fish-hawk).
Bald-headed eagle.
Golden eagle.
Turkey-buzzard (or vulture).
Mexican buzzard.
Wood-ibis.
White ibis.
Roseate spoonbill-ibis (or red curlew.)
Sandhill crane.
Common crane.
American flamingo.
Mallard (or English duck).
Wood-duck.
Teal.

Widgeon.

Snipe (English Snipe).

Solitary snipe.

Canvas-back duck.

Sand-piper.

Shoveler-duck.

Blue duck.

Wild Turkey.

Water-turkey (or snake-bird).

Limpkin (or crying-bird).

Oyster-bird.

Loon (or great northern diver).

Rice-bird.

Blue-bird.

Red-bird.

Cardinal-bird.

Mocking-bird.

Doudle red-crested bird.

American grey kingfisher.

Whip-poor-Will.

Owl.

Green parroquet.

Golden woodpecker.

Ivory-bill woodpecker.

Green woodpecker.

Turtle-dove.

Ground-dove.

Oriole.

Swallow.

Sparrow.

Robin.

Florida quail.

Sea-gull.

Blue Jay.

In the rivers, and estuaries, the Gulf of Mexico, Gulf of Florida, and Inlets of the Atlantic, the following are the principal fish we observed or caught. Those marked with an asterisk are considered good to eat.

*Pompono.

*Mullet.

*Grouper.

*Sheep's-head.

*Grunter.

*Black bass (or trout).

*Perch.

*Bream.

*Jack.

*Shad.

Ten-pounders.

Shark.

*Eels.

Cow-fish.

Porcupine-fish.
Drum-fish.
Saw-fish.
Sword-fish.
*Red-fish.
Devil-fish.
Cat-fish.
Electric-fish.
Tobacco-pipe-fish.
*Jew-fish.
*Angel-fish.
Sting-ray.
Whip-ray.
Porpoise.
Conch.
Oyster.
Coon-oyster.
Clam.
Sea-crab.
River-crab.
Purple land-crab.
Fidler-crab.
Molucca-crab.
Cray-fish.
Sea-egg.
Argonaut.

Also green turtle, loggerhead-turtle, hawk's-bill turtle, gopher or land-turtle, and terrapin. All considered excellent eating in Florida.

Of poisonous reptiles, we came across large and ground rattlesnakes, mocassin-snakes, scorpions, and centipedes.

Among non-poisonous reptiles were alligators and black snakes.

Of the "Feræ Naturæ," we met the following:—Black bear, deer, opossum, otter, ocelot or cat, squirrel, wolf, wild-boar, wild cattle, pole-cat, puma or panther, rabbit, racoon.

The noxious insects, the greatest curse of the country, were mosquitoes, sand-flies, horse-flies, hornet-flies, common flies, fleas, ticks, tarantulas, ants, spiders, beetles, and cockroaches.

Wasps, bees, and butterflies were also numerous, but remarkably few of the latter were of any great beauty.

THE END.

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